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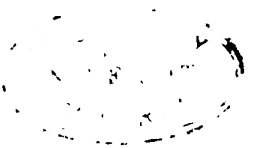
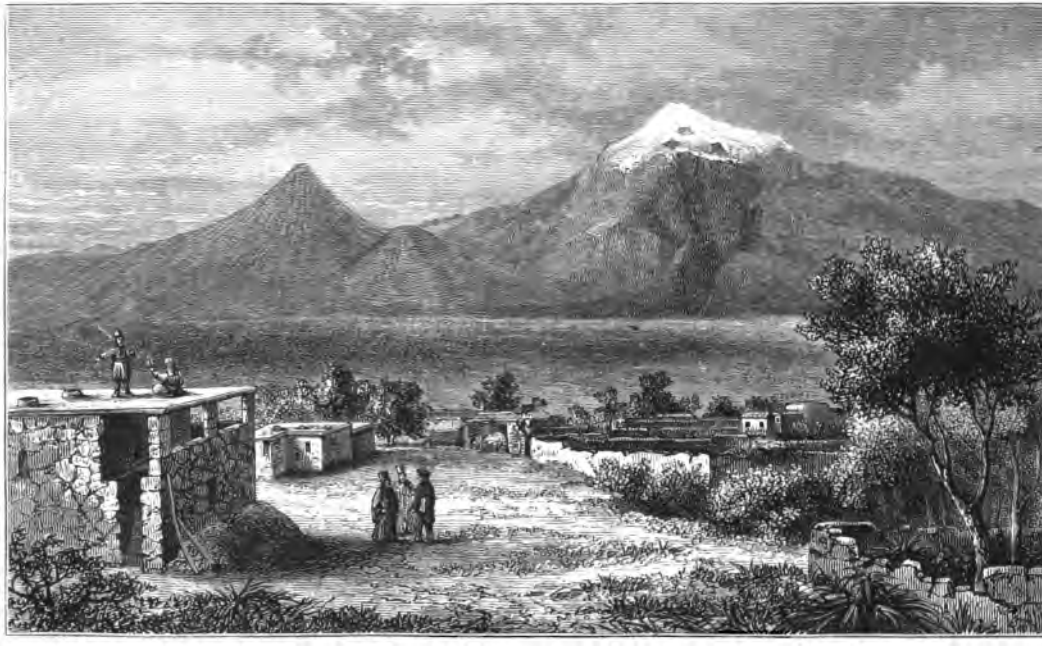




GREAT AND LITTLE ARARAT FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

TRANSCAUCASIA

AND

ARARAT:

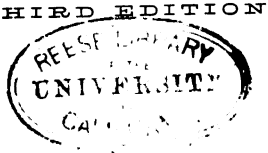
BEING

NOTES OF A VACATION TOUR IN THE AUTUMN OF 1876.

By JAMES BRYCE,
AUTHOR OF 'THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE.'

WITH COLOURED MAP.

THIRD EDITION.



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TO

ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY, D.D.,

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF A LONG FRIENDSHIP AND

MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS.

PREFACE.

THE following pages contain a record of impressions received during a journey in the autumn of 1876 through Russia, the Caucasian countries, and the Turkish empire. They are first impressions only, for which no value can be claimed except that which belongs to impressions formed on the spot, and (as the author trusts) without a prejudice in favour of either of the states which are now contending in the regions here described. Yet even first impressions, if honestly formed, may sometimes atone for their crudity by their freshness. What most readers desire to know about a country is how it strikes a new-comer. A book that tries to give this, to present the general effect, so to speak, of the landscape, may have its function, even though it cannot satisfy the scientific student of geography or politics.

The author, however, did not travel with the intention of writing a book, nor would he, sensible as he is of his imperfect knowledge, have now thought of sending these notes to the press but for two reasons. One is the unexpected importance which the outbreak of war in the countries he visited has given to them.

The other is the urgency of his friends, whose curiosity regarding Mount Ararat has made him think it worth while to print a narrative of what he saw, and who assure him that some account of a mountain which every one has heard of, but about which comparatively little has been written, would be more interesting to English and American readers than he had at first supposed.

He is indebted to his friends Captain J. Buchan Telfer, R.N., Mr. Douglas W. Freshfield, and Professor Judd, of the Royal School of Mines, for information on several points, and returns his thanks to the Editor and proprietors of the 'Cornhill Magazine' for the permission they have given him to reprint the substance of an article which he contributed to that magazine in last May.

The publication of the book has been delayed by a domestic sorrow which has destroyed such pleasure as the composition of it might have given, the loss of one whose companion he had been in mountain expeditions from childhood, and to whom he owes whatever taste he possesses for geographical observation and for the beauties of nature.

LINCOLN'S INN, LONDON:
September 12, 1877.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOLGA AND THE STEPPE OF SOUTHERN RUSSIA.

(Pp. 1–41.)

	PAGE
Nijni Novgorod and its Fair	2
The Volga steamers and the life on board	5
Scenery of the Volga	11
Navigation of the river: trade on it	13
Kazan	15
The Jigoulef Hills	19
Saratof	22
Resemblances between Russia and the United States ..	23
Railway journey through the steppe to the Sea of Azof ..	30
Character of the steppe: impressions of its scenery ..	31
The Sea of Azof	37
From Rostof to the foot of the Caucasus	38

CHAPTER II.

THE CAUCASUS.

(Pp. 42–87.)

Structure of the Caucasian chain	42
Character of its scenery	46
Its historical importance	48
Peoples inhabiting the Caucasus	51

PAGE
Russian conquest of Daghestan and Circassia 56
Present political condition of the mountain country .. 59
The watering-places: Pjätigorsk 61
Railway to Vladikavkaz 67
Road over the main chain to Tiflis 69
The Dariel Pass: the Caucasian Gates 73
Mount Kazbek 77
Descent into Georgia: arrival at Tiflis 83

CHAPTER III.

TRANSCAUCASIA.

(Pp. 88–130.)

General physical character of Transcaucasia: its mountains and plains 89
Climate and vegetation: scenery 92
Natural productions 95
Inhabitants: Mingrelians; Imeritians 97
Georgians or Grusinians; Armenians 100
Tatars: their brigandage 105
Persians; Russians; Germans; the mountain tribes .. 111
Russian government and administration 116
Impressions of the country, social and historical 123
Political future of Transcaucasia 125

CHAPTER IV.

TIFLIS.

(Pp. 131–156.)

Situation and aspect of the city 131
Divisions of the city: the Russian quarter 134
The Eastern town 135
The German colony 138

PAGE
The inhabitants: mixture of races; aspect of the streets .. 141
History of Tiflis 147
Walks and excursions: the Sololaki Hill: Kajori .. 151

CHAPTER V.

THROUGH ARMENIA TO ARARAT.

(Pp. 157–197.)

The steppe of the Kur valley 159
Alarms of robbers: the Red Bridge 162
Valley of the Akstafa: Delijan 165
The Goktcha Lake: Daratchitchak 168
Scenery of Armenia: Mount Ala Göz 171
Erivan: aspects of Eastern life 175
The Sardar's palace: the mosque 179
Drive through the Araxes plain 185
The Ford of the Araxes 189
Aralykh at the foot of Ararat 190
View of Ararat: ruins of Artaxata 193

CHAPTER VI.

ARARAT.

(Pp. 198–241.)

Various names of the mountain 198
Its identification with the Mountain of the Ark in Genesis 199
Notices of it in mediæval books of travel 204
Legends relating to it 208
General structure of the two Ararats 210
Geology: Abich's views stated 214
Volcanic phenomena: absence of central craters 217
Meteorology: great height of the snow-line 222
Vegetation 227
Animals 230

PAGE
General aspect: view of the mountain from the plains .. 231
Political importance of Ararat 233
Belief in its inaccessibility: recorded ascents 235
Great earthquake of 1840 239

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASCENT OF ARARAT.

(Pp. 242–293.)

The start from Aralykh 242
Ascent of the outer slopes 243
The Cossack station and well of Sardarbulakh 247
Kurdish shepherds at the well with their flocks 253
Climb by night from Sardarbulakh to the foot of the cone 258
Ascent of the great cone 264
Cossack and Kurd refuse to ascend further 266
The great snow basin: upper slope of rotten rock .. 273
The Summit 277
View from the summit 279
Descent to Sardarbulakh 285
Reach Aralykh: our Cossack escort 292
Impossibility of ascending Ararat 293

CHAPTER VIII.

ETCHMIADZIN AND THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE.

(Pp. 294–326.)

Road from Erivan to Etchmiadzin 294
Foundation of the Armenian church 297
Monastery of Etchmiadzin: the Cathedral 299
Relics: the hand of St. Gregory 302
The Seminary; general impressions of the monastery .. 305
Sketch of Armenian history 311
The great Armenian emigration 314

PAGE
Present condition of the Armenians 317
Physical aspect of the Armenians: their language and literature 321
Their sufferings under Turkish rule 324

CHAPTER IX.

FROM ERIVAN TO THE BLACK SEA.

(Pp. 327–361.)

The Kurds: their character and history 327
The journey back from Erivan to Tiflis: alarms of robbers 330
Railways in the Caucasus 334
By rail from Tiflis to Gori 335
The rock city of Uphlis Tzikhé 339
Across the watershed into Mingrelia 345
Arrival at Poti: difficulties of embarkation 348
Poti and its inhabitants 351
Crossing the bar of the Phasis 357
View from the sea off Batum 359

CHAPTER X.

FROM POTI TO CONSTANTINOPLE BY THE BLACK SEA.

(Pp. 362–389.)

Batum and its port 362
Trebizond 363
Character of the Pontic coast 367
Samsun and Sinope 369
The steamer and its passengers: Persians and Turkmans 372
Turks, Greeks, and Armenians 374
Franks; mixture of languages 377
Condition of Asia Minor: melancholy impression it makes 378
Sail down the Bosphorus 382
Constantinople: first view of the city 384
Picturesqueness of its interior 388

CHAPTER XI.

SOME POLITICAL REFLECTIONS.

(Pp. 390–420.)

	PAGE
Remarks on the state of Transcaucasia	390
Religion as a separating influence in the East	392
Difficulties of Russia in working her Asiatic territories ..	394
Annexation injurious to Russia	396
Impressions of Turkey: the Turks an army of occupation	398
The Turkish government is dying	402
Anarchy in the provinces	405
Is it possible to erect an Armenian state?	406
Can the Turkish administration be reformed?	408
Colonization	411
British interests: export trade to the Euxine	412
India and the Suez Canal	413
Influence of England in the East	415
Feelings towards England: her true policy	417

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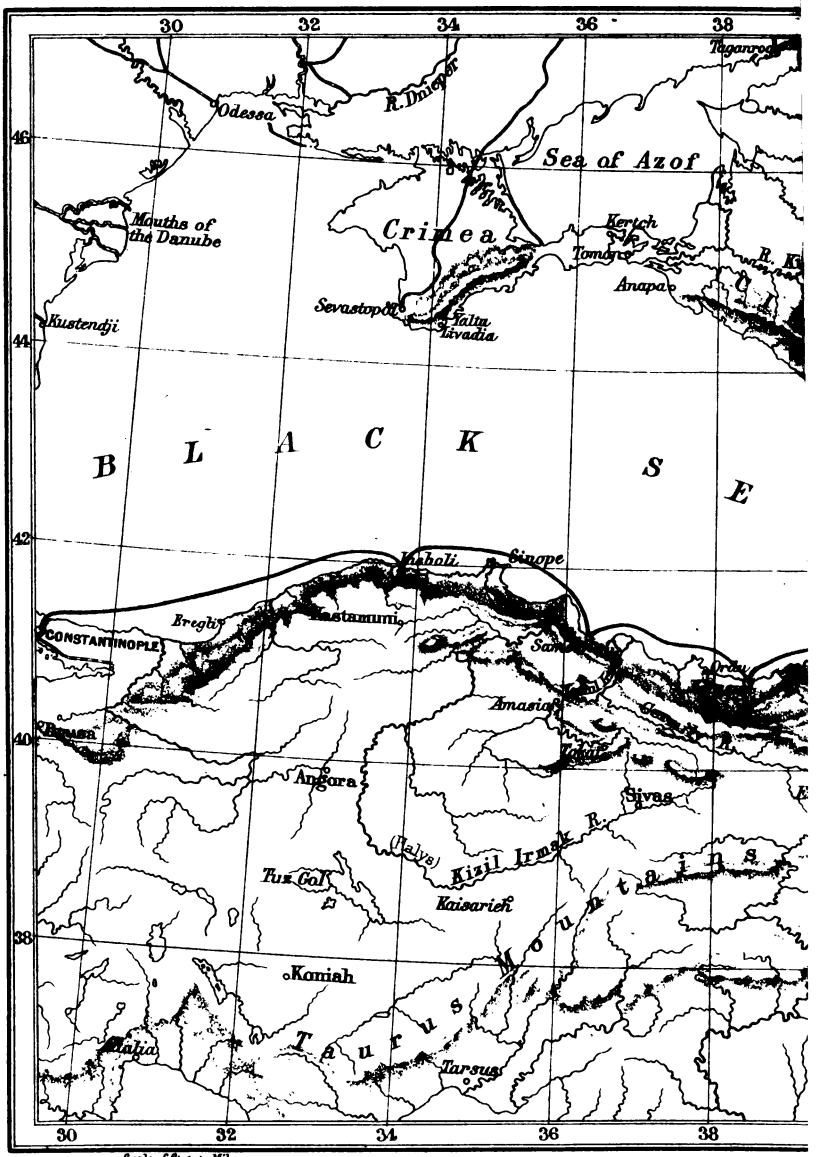
30
32
34
36
38
Taganrog
Odessa
R. Dniepr
46
Sea of Azof
Mouths of the Danube
Crimea
Kertch
Tomajo
R. K
Anapa
Sevastopol
Yalta
Livadia
Kustendji
44
B L A C K S E
42
Sinope
Eregli
Kastamuni
CONSTANTINOPLE
Amasia
40
Angora
Sivas
(Halys) Kizil Irmak R.
Tuz Gol
Kaisarieh
38
Koniah
Taurus Mountains
Malia
Tarsus
30
32
34
36
38
Scale of Statute Miles
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TRANSCAUCASIA AND ARARAT.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOLGA AND THE STEPPE OF SOUTHERN RUSSIA.

NORTH-WESTERN Russia, although it is now pretty easy of access from Western Europe, and contains two such wonderfully striking cities as Moscow and St. Petersburg, is very little visited by travellers. South-eastern Russia is hardly visited at all. Nijni Novgorod, whose great fair draws some few sight-seers as well as men of business from Germany and the farther west, seems to be the limit of the tourist, and beyond it, all the way to Tiflis or Constantinople, one does not see a single stranger travelling for pleasure, and discovers from the attentions which the western visitor receives, how rare such a visitor is. I need, therefore, make no apology for giving some short account of the Lower Volga, and the great steppe of Southern Russia, before getting to the Caucasus and Armenia, for all four are likely to be equally unfamiliar to English readers. As this does not apply to the gathering which has made Nijni famous, there is no occasion to describe it here, especially as a full account of the fair and its humours may be found in

a lively little book of collected letters published three years ago by Mr. Butler Johnstone. One or two observations, however, it is worth while to make by way of advice to future travellers.

People are constantly told that Nijni Fair is Oriental and picturesque, that they will find in it specimens of all the peoples of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, dressed and demeaning themselves each after its several kind—that it is in fact a sort of Eastern ethnological museum. This may have been true twenty years ago; it is not true now. The fair is picturesque, and in a certain way, which I will mention presently, more striking than one expects, but there is no longer any great richness of costume, any great variety of national types observable. Asiatic as well as European Russians have now, except in the peasant class, taken to Western fashions in dress, and so far as the outer man goes it is hard to tell a Siberian of Irkutsk from an Odessa or Riga merchant. The Finnish tribes from both sides of the Ural Mountains, and the various Turkish or Mongol tribes of the steppe, Kirghiz, Bashkirs, Kalmucks, and such like, are not represented, or at any rate not so as to be a noticeable feature; it is only the Persians and the few Turkmans who come from Tashkend or Bokhara that give anything of an Oriental character to the vast crowd, estimated at 100,000 people, that is gathered here every July. Nor, again, are there many beautiful articles to be seen exposed for sale. The display of jewellery was not larger or better than one might see in any two good shops in St. Peters-

burg; and the other goods shewn—silks and carpets from Tiflis and Persia, furs from Siberia, ornamental work of various kinds from different places in Russia —might have been bought as good, if not as cheap, in the bazaars of Moscow or in Regent Street. The interest of the fair lies deeper, and is matter for the economist or politician rather than for the artist.

Here one stands at the great centre of Russian commerce and influence, the heart which pulsates over Eastern Europe and the half of Asia. The limits of its influence, the remotest points whence people flock to attend it, are Teheran and Bokhara to the south-east, Kiakhta, on the Chinese frontier, to the east, Warsaw and Riga on the west. Over all this area Russia practically commands the markets, and here her manufactured goods, iron, pottery, cotton stuffs, and so forth, are exchanged for the caravan tea which has been brought across Siberia, carpets and silks from Persia, wool from Turkestan. The absence from the stalls of English, French, and German goods makes one realize how successful the Russian protective tariff has been in shutting out foreign competition; while the roughness and tastelessness of the home manufactures, which imitate Western patterns without Western finish, shew how little chance Russian manufacturers would as yet have against their neighbours in a fair field.

Here you have under your eyes, in the substantial form of long islands covered with Siberian or Uralian iron, of fleets laden with fish from Astrakhan, of a whole suburb built with bales of caravan tea, the evi-

dence of those movements and relations of trade which the imagination usually finds it so hard to realize, and which are such mighty factors in social as well as political history. The scene speaks not only of the vastness of the scale on which this trade goes on, but also of the rude and undeveloped condition of the countries that support it, where the mechanism of exchange and distribution is still so imperfectly organized that men are obliged to see one another and to bring their wares to this central spot to be displayed, instead of trusting to agencies and correspondence. This concourse of merchants, and many details of the business done, which can only be understood when they are actually seen, do therefore present enough that is interesting and curious to repay the trouble of a journey hither. And there is one view, at least, too striking to be forgotten by any one who has enjoyed it, I mean the *coup d'œil* over the whole fair from the Mouravief Tower. To the east, one sees Nijni town, whose ancient kremlin (citadel) and green-domed cathedral crowns the lofty southern bank of the Oka ; in front are the two great tranquil streams—Volga and Oka—each a quarter of a mile wide, bearing on their bosoms thousands of vessels from every part of the vast water system of Russia ; between them lies the Fair itself, long streets of brick warehouses, booths, and tents, bubbling and throbbing with the busy crowd, which pours to and fro, on foot and in carriages, across the bridge of boats that joins the Fair to the city ; while round all lies a boundless green plain, along which the straining eye follows the

three shining lines of water till they sink below the far horizon.

We steamed away from Nijni on the morning of August 24th, threading our way through an endless crowd of vessels laden with iron, fish, and wood. As the last masts and domes vanished behind us, we felt as if entering a new world, borne along by the strong majestic stream to the mysterious East—the East which discovery has so spared that it is now less known and more mysterious than the West. One thing, however, remained to remind one forcibly, almost ludicrously, of the West, I mean the steamboat that carried us, which was built exactly on the pattern of those that ply on the Hudson or the Mississippi. Of her three decks, one was almost level with the water, and occupied by the third class passengers; a second, raised above the last, contained the first and second class saloons; and a third, which was open, formed the roof of the saloons, and supplied a pleasant promenade. She was a swift as well as light and handsome boat, drawing, when half loaded, only four feet of water, and a jolly old Russian admiral who was on board, and seemed, from the authority he assumed, to be a director of the company that owned her, insisted on showing us over every nook and cranny of her, with an air that seemed to doubt whether England could produce her like. Everything seemed clean and trim and comfortable enough during the day; the saloon especially, opening immediately on the deck, with windows which commanded a view of both banks, was a better sitting-room than

one often finds in an English vessel. But at night we could not help regretting the snug berths of an American steamer. For in Russia there are (speaking generally) only two classes of travellers, those to whom expense incurred for comfort and propriety is nothing, and those to whom comfort and propriety are scarcely known. The former carry their own bedding about with them; the latter do not go to bed at all, but coil themselves up in their sheepskins and go to sleep wherever it may happen. The large and respectable middle class of Germany or France, who want comfort, but cannot afford luxury or lordly independence, do not exist. Hence, in all hotels, except the very best, and everywhere in the steamers, you get no blankets and sheets except by special arrangement, and have always a sort of sense of bivouacking in your rug or great-coat. That was what had to be done here in the little sofa cabins round the saloon.

As regards food there was nothing to complain of. Russia is eminently a land of good cooking; even the simple *stchi*, or cabbage broth, on which one often has to fall back, is usually tasty and nourishing, and here, with sterlet and sturgeon swimming about him, and cooks who know how to make the most of their materials, an epicure might have been content. The sterlet soup, of which the Russians are so fond of talking, quite answers its reputation, and other dishes whose names I forget are hardly less famous. Our only difficulty about dinner was how to order it, for *table d'hôte* is the rare exception in Russia, and none of the steward's staff spoke anything but Russian or

Tatar.[1] The waiters in Russian inns and steamers are usually Tatars; most of them come from Riazan or Penza, and are good-looking fellows enough, but some are downright Kalmucks in face. So when six o'clock arrived, we had to hunt up and down the boat for some good-natured passenger who talked French or German, and through him convey our wishes. Fortunately the good-nature of Russians is boundless, and here, where a traveller is so rare, he is an object of special interest and goodwill, who is talked to about the country and its prospects as if he were an ambassador, or even a special correspondent. This friendliness was all the pleasanter because we had hardly expected it. Everyone had said to us in St. Petersburg, "You have come at a bad time. Our people are greatly exasperated against England. They regard you as the abettors of the Turks, as the accomplices in the Bulgarian massacres." (This was just after the great massacres of May had become known in Russia and before the English indignation meetings in September.) "They think that you prefer Mohammedans to Christians, and for your own selfish purposes—heaven knows what they are—are ready to support and justify all the oppressions and cruelties of the Turks. So when you get away from this cosmopolitan town up to Moscow and the interior of our country, you must be prepared to meet with rudeness, perhaps even with insults."

[1] The spelling "Tatar," instead of the old and admittedly erroneous "Tartar," seems to be now sufficiently well established for an unscientific writer to adopt it.

Nothing of the kind. I am bound to say that we never fell into talk with a Russian without being reproached with our sympathy for the Turks. It was always assumed that we, as Englishmen, of course stood over the massacres, and we were asked how we could be so unchristian. Indeed to most people's minds England appeared scarcely less guilty than the Porte, for was it not England that by rejecting the Berlin Memorandum had stopped the joint action of the Six Powers? Was it not the English fleet at Besika Bay and the English envoy at Constantinople that encouraged Turkey to harden her heart? But even the reproaches were made with perfect courtesy. Whether one would have been better treated two years before, I cannot say, but considering the prodigious excitement that reigned—an excitement that pervaded all classes, and which seemed to us to have little to do with Panslavic theories, and still less with schemes of territorial aggression—it was a wonder to me that, being generally recognized as Englishmen, we were treated so well.

Except a few Persians and Turkmans from Bokhara, who performed their devotions towards Mecca with exemplary regularity, the passengers seemed to be all Russian subjects, though several were Germans, natives either of Germany or of the Baltic Provinces. Two or three of the others, as well as the captain, who was an officer in the imperial navy, spoke French or a little English, so that one was not ill off for opportunities of talk. But it is quite a mistake to suppose, as is commonly believed in England, and as the Russians them-

selves are always telling you, that in Russia everybody in the better classes speaks one or more foreign languages. The high nobility do, no doubt, speak French as well as the Parisians themselves, though the growth of national spirit and of what are called Slavophil principles makes them use it less than formerly; many of their daughters, who are often educated by English governesses, speak English also, while scientific and literary people, professors, engineers, and such like, must of course know German. But the ordinary Russian, not merely the shopkeeper, merchant, and priest or monk, but the officer, civil servant, or lower noble, is confined to his mother tongue. One meets in travelling with enormous numbers of officers—they are all in uniform and seem to form half the population of the country—and most of them shake their heads when you accost them in either French or German. In fact I do not believe that a knowledge of foreign languages is any more common than in England, or as common as it is in Germany. The difference rather is that those who do speak French or German speak it more fluently than we. And the popular notion on the subject seems to have arisen partly from this fact, partly because most Englishmen form their impressions from the high society, or from the commercial society, of the capital (which is itself quite an exceptional place, no more typical of Russia than New York is of America), and partly from the abundance of Germans scattered all over the country and filling so many civil and military, educational and scientific posts. It

is upon these Germans that he who travels without a courier or a knowledge of Russian has chiefly to rely; and it will go hard with him if on a steamer, or at a railway station, or in a baker's or druggist's shop in one of the bigger towns, he cannot find such an one willing to interpret for the nonce. Failing these, he is indeed badly off. For there are so few words common to the Slavonic languages with the Teutonic or Romance, and the alphabet is at first so puzzling, that it is hard to remember even the common names of things, or to decipher a railway time-table.

There was an oddly miscellaneous little library on board, consisting apparently of the leavings of many travellers, mainly Russian, but with several French novels and about as many solid German treatises, and two books in English. One of these last was a record of spiritual manifestations in America, whose presence there surprised a Russian acquaintance of ours, for all spiritualistic writings are strictly prohibited by the police, and this, instead of lying about on the cabin table, ought to have been seized at the frontier, and reserved for the private enjoyment of the censor. There is a very comprehensive *Index Expurgatorius* in Russia, and people often told me they found their best Western books carried off by the custom-house, never to reappear. But, as every body knows, Alexander Herzen's revolutionary 'Kolokol' found its way everywhere, and was read by all the officials up to the Emperor himself; and the same is said to be the case with the less brilliant socialist writers of to-day. The other book was 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' whose

pictures of an English country town, with its gossips, quarrels, and sorrows, lit up by a noble life like that of Mr. Tryon in 'Janet's Repentance,' had never seemed so vivid as when read in this far-off land, and set side by side with the parallel, yet wonderfully dissimilar, glimpses of Russian life which were given us in the pages of a scarcely less wonderful genius, Ivan Turgenef.

Of all modes of travelling, a river steamboat is probably the pleasantest. It is exhilarating to rush through the air at a pace of eighteen miles an hour, the swift current adding several miles to what the strong engines can accomplish. One moves freely about, reads or writes when so inclined, sits down and chats with a fellow passenger, enjoys to perfection the bracing freshness of the air and the changing hues of sunset. All this is to be had on the Volga steamers, *plus* the delightful sense of novelty; and although the scenery is not striking, it may be called pleasing, quite good enough to see once. Mr. Mackenzie Wallace (whose very interesting book I assume to be known to any one who reads this one[1]) thinks the Volga tame, but I cannot help fancying this is because the Russians, who are eager to make the most of everything their country can shew, had talked too much to him about it. We, who expected only a muddy stream between dull, flat banks, were agreeably surprised by the reality. Of course, it is not so grand as the Danube is above the Iron Gate, or the Douro between the wine

[1] It may be proper to say that this chapter was written before I had read more than a very little of Mr. Wallace's book.

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country and Oporto, nor comparable in point of beauty with the richly wooded Upper Mississippi, or the Rhine, or the Upper Elbe. It is altogether in a less ambitious style than any of these, so that one is not even reminded of them. But in its own quiet way it is enjoyable, and the more so from the contrast between the two shores. All the way down from Yaroslaf till near the Caspian the right bank is high, from 120 to 160 or even 200 feet above the stream, generally steep, often prettily wooded, or cut down by picturesque little gullies filled with brushwood. On this side one sees no cultivation, though here and there a village nestles between the hill and the shore, or crowns the top of the slope with the green cupola of its church glittering afar off under the sun; and might fancy that one was sailing down through a half-occupied pastoral land. But up behind, on the table-land of which this steep bank is the edge, there is a well-peopled country, full of farms and villages, with a soil which, away down southward beyond Kazan, becomes exceedingly fertile. The opposite, the left or north-eastern bank, is perfectly flat; first a belt of sand covered by the stream in the floods of spring, then willows and alders, then pastures and cornfields with patches of wood between, and here and there a low ridge, hardly to be called an eminence, stretching away farther than the eye can reach. Between this boundless plain and this bold hill the Volga sweeps along in majestic curves and reaches, and the contrast between the two, the varying aspects which the promontories take as one approaches and

recedes from them, give a pleasing variety to the landscape. Except at one point, you cannot call it beautiful, but it is all so green and so peaceful, the air is so exquisitely clear, there is such a sense of expanse in the wide plain and the sky vaulted over it, the stream down which one speeds is so wide, and calm, and strong, that there is a pleasure in the voyage it is easier to feel than describe.

The ship touches but seldom at the banks, for there are few towns, and when she does stop, it is rather for the sake of taking in wood than of passengers or cargo. A gang of women is usually waiting for us at the wharf, who carry on board bundles of chopped wood; while all the spare population of the villages comes down in its sheepskins and stands looking on, munching its cucumbers the while. Sheepskins, with the woolly side turned in, are the usual summer as well as winter wear of the peasants in these parts. As for cucumbers, the national passion for them is something wonderful. They are set down at every meal in hotels and steamers, while the poorer folk seem to live pretty much upon them and bread. If I were asked to characterise the most conspicuous externals of Russia in three words, they should be "sheepskins, cucumbers, emeralds."[1] We meet or overtake plenty of vessels, sometimes making slow way under sail, sometimes towed by a tug, sometimes working themselves up by the primitive contrivance of an anchor and wind-

[1] The profusion of fine gems, especially emeralds, rubies, and sapphires, you are shewn in geological and antiquarian collections, sewn on to sacerdotal vestments, stuck on to the gold plates with which the sacred pictures are overlaid, is extraordinary.

lass, the anchor carried up-stream for several hundred yards and dropped, and the ship hauled up to it by winding up the anchor cable with the windlass. But these vessels are nearly all laden either with fish from Astrakhan, to feed the peasantry of the central provinces, or with iron or copper from Siberia and the Ural on its way to the manufacturing district of Tula.

Local traffic there is very little; for the country is peopled only by peasants whose life is simple, and whose wants are few. Many villages are not even Russian, but belong to some of the various Finnish tribes—Tchouvasses, Tcheremisses, Mordvins—who formerly occupied the whole of this region, though most of them have now adopted, or are fast adopting, the religion, customs, and tongue of their Slavonic masters. In another half-century the country will be completely Russian.

But the through traffic, as a railway man would say, is great and still increasing, and for its sake the government have taken some pains with the Volga navigation, which the numerous shoals and sandspits render very troublesome. Buoys are anchored in many dangerous spots, landmarks are placed along the shore, and at night coloured lights are shewn. Although our steamer drew only four feet of water there were so many shoals and sandbanks about, that, instead of holding an even course down the middle of the stream, she was perpetually darting across it from the one shore to the other, so as to keep in the deepest part of the channel. Whenever one of the shallower parts was reached a bell was rung, which

brought some of the crew forward, and one of them took his place armed with a long pole, the lower part of which was marked in colours, just like the "stick" in croquet, each foot's length having a different colour. This pole he nimbly plunged into the water just before the bow, till it touched the bottom, and then seeing by the marks on it what the depth was, he sang out, "vosem," "sem," "shest" (eight, seven, six), as the case might be, the vessel still advancing. As the smaller numbers began to be reached, a slight thrill ran through the group that watched, and when "piat" (five) followed, the engines were slowed or stopped in a moment, and we glided softly along over the shoal till "sem," "vosem," "deviat" (nine), following in succession, told that the risk of grounding was for the moment past.

Watching these manœuvres, and the constantly changing yet singularly uniform landscapes which revealed themselves as we rounded one promontory after another, time wore pleasantly on, till about noon on the second day we saw the towers of the famous city of Kazan rise above the low north-eastern shore, and found that there was just time to drive there and back in a swift droshky, so that to the end of one's life one might talk of having done Kazan. Though in our maps Kazan appears as standing on the Volga, it is really nearly three miles from the summer bed of the stream, on an eminence beyond a flat piece of ground over which the spring floods pour. The country round is so level that the hill, which is covered by its kremlin, seems quite imposing, albeit only some forty

feet high. This elevation, with the battlements of the kremlin wall, two or three old towers, and the blue and gilded domes of the churches, gives the city from a distance a somewhat lordly look, not unworthy of the former capital of a great Tatar Khanate. Inside, however, it is disappointing to find scarcely a trace of antiquity. One of the towers of the kremlin, a curious pyramid of brick, is said to come down from the days of independence, but the rest was destroyed and rebuilt by the Czar Ivan the Terrible (a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth), and the town, like most places in Russia, has been so often burnt down that now everything is new. Long straight streets with stuccoed houses, a university with a stiff Corinthian portico (columns also of stucco) and dreary corridors to right and left, official buildings without end, and shops with glass fronts to them, give it an air of respectability and civilization very different from most Russian towns, which are chiefly open spaces of grass or mud, interrupted here and there by brick cottages and wooden shanties. But there is nothing except a few slender minarets in the lower town to betray that Oriental character which we had been wont to associate with its sounding Oriental name. Among the people in the streets, who were few enough, there were some with the black sheepskin hats which the Tatars affect; otherwise there was little to distinguish them from ordinary Russians. However, the truth is that the diversity of blood in all this part of the country gives rise to many types of face, and one finds it hard to say which is the true Russian. In the

centre, between Kief, Moscow, and Petersburg, there is no doubt a purer Slavonic race; but in these more easterly governments the Muscovites are only comparatively recent colonists among Finnish and Turkish tribes. The Tatars of Kazan, who are no doubt Turks, retain not only their language and their religion but their social usages; they rarely or never intermarry with the Russians, but otherwise live on good enough terms with them, and do not seem to complain of the Christian government, which has been wise enough not to meddle with their faith. Since the fall of their Khanate three hundred years ago, they have rarely given any trouble, and now serve in the army like other subjects of the Czar. They are usually strong men, lithe and sinewy, of a make more spare than that of the Russians, and do most of the hard work both here, in their own country, and at Nijni and other trading spots along the river. In their faces is seen a good deal of that grave fixity which gives a dignity even to the humblest Oriental, and contrasts so markedly with the mobile features of the Slav.

Sailing away from Kazan, and seeing its glittering towers and domes sink slowly from view into the boundless plain, we inquired from everyone we could talk to about the ruins of the ancient capital of the Bulgarians, which are said to exist some few miles from the river to the east, huge shapeless mounds which are now the only memorial of a kingdom older than any of the Russian principalities, a kingdom which flourished in the sixth and seventh centuries,

before the Bulgarian hordes descended into the Danube valley to vex the Byzantine emperors. But no one knew anything of the ruins ; indeed I doubt if any one on board had heard of them before. Archæology, except perhaps as a branch of hagiology, or in the learned circles of St. Petersburg and Moscow, has scarcely begun to exist in Russia; it is one of the latest births of time everywhere, and, as one may see from the fate of so many of our own pre-historic monuments, does not commend itself to the practical mind of the agriculturist. The only countries in which the traveller finds the common people knowing and revering the monuments and legends of their remote past are Norway and Iceland, where the sagas read aloud in the long nights of winter from manuscripts preserved in lonely farm-houses, have through many generations fired the imagination and ennobled the life of the peasant, who knew no other literature and history than that of his own ancestors.

Below Kazan the scenery of the river remains much the same for many miles. On the east the Kama comes in, a majestic stream, about one-third of a mile wide, bearing on its calm bosom flotillas of vessels laden with iron from Perm and the Ural, and tea brought by caravan across Siberia. After the confluence the Volga is not at first sensibly wider, but it grows deeper, and the steamer, instead of flitting like a dragon-fly hither and thither across the current, holds on an even course down the middle, leaving on the left a labyrinth of low and generally wooded isles. Gradually the bank on the right increases in height, and strata of chalk begin to crop out on its face, till

at last we reach the Jigoulef hills, the most beautiful piece of scenery on the whole river, and one which would be beautiful even in a country far more attractive than Russia. Hills four to six hundred feet high rise steeply on the right bank of the stream, clothed with luxuriant wood, beech, hazel, birch, oak, hornbeam, and other deciduous trees, their autumnal gold and scarlet mingled here and there with the dark green of fir clumps, their slopes cut deep by ravines and bushy little dells, where a patch of sunny greensward is seen through the boughs beside a sparkling brook. Imagine this wealth of wood interrupted here and there by a miniature cliff of blue limestone, crowning the summit of some jutting promontory, and the whole mirrored in the glassy flood that pours along, deep and strong, but smooth and silent as a lake, with ridge after ridge and bay after bay down the long vista of its banks, and you have a picture to which all Russia, from the Euxine to the Frozen Sea, cannot supply the like. The elements of beauty in it are so simple that one is half surprised to find the result so beautiful. Perhaps this is partly because we English are so little accustomed to great rivers that they make a correspondingly profound impression on us, the sense of their grandeur and of the tremendous part they play in the development of countries and nations giving them a power over the imagination which enhances even the visual perception of their beauty.

All along this range of hills which borders the stream for more than twenty miles, there is not a house or sign of life visible; but up behind, on the

level ground stretching out to the south and west, the land is richly cultivated, and indeed constitutes one of the largest and best cultivated estates in all Russia, the property of Count Orloff Davydoff, who owns the whole country enclosed in that remarkable bend of the Volga, which may be seen on any map of Europe between Simbirsk and Saratof. Just at the eastern-most point of the bend the river turns south, breaking through the Jigoulef ridge which has bordered it for twenty miles, and here, at the town of Samara, one seems suddenly to pass, as if through a gate in the hills, from Europe into Asia. Up to this point all has been green, moist, fresh-looking, the air soft though brilliantly clear, the grass not less juicy than in England, the wayside flowers and trees very similar to our own, if not always of the same species. But once through the hills, and looking away south-east across the boundless steppe towards Orenburg and the Ural river, a different climate and scenery reveal themselves. The air is hot and dry, the parched earth gapes under the sun, the hills are bare, or clothed only with withered weeds; plants and shrubs of unfamiliar aspect appear, the whole landscape has a tawny torrid look, as if of an African desert. Henceforth, all the way to the Black Sea, one felt one's self in the glowing East, and seemed at a glance to realize the character of the wilderness that stretches from here all the way, a plain with scarcely a mound to break its monotony, to the banks of the Oxus and the foot of the Thian Shan mountains.

Along the first part of this great plain the Russians

were then building a railway, the terminus of which, not quite completed, we saw at Samara. It has now been opened as far as Orenburg, a distance of 280 miles, and they talk of carrying it on from Orenburg to Tashkend, the present capital of their dominions in Turkestan. The distance, however, is so great—over 1200 miles by the present route—and money is so scarce, that this is not likely to be soon accomplished; although it would immensely strengthen their hold upon Central Asia, enabling troops and supplies to pass from the Volga to the Jaxartes in three days, instead of four or five weeks. As the country is flat, with only one great river, the Ural or Yaik, to be bridged, the construction of the line would not present grave difficulties; but all the wood for sleepers would have to be carried along as the rails were laid, the steppe being perfectly bare, station-houses must be built, men must be kept to clear the line of snow, and the traffic would not for many years, or perhaps centuries, to come be sufficient to cover the expenses of working. The Russians, who are eager to become a great commercial nation, would no doubt find an easier market for their goods in Central Asia; but those countries are too thinly peopled, and too likely to remain so, to make even this an object of great consequence. If the railway is made, it will be for military rather than for commercial reasons.

From Samara onwards (a town famous for the "cure" of koumiss or fermented mare's milk, which is said to be so efficacious in consumption and some other complaints) the river scenery becomes less

interesting. On the east, one has always the bare steppe, stretching farther than eye can reach in an unbroken flat. On the west, ridges of brown, or red, or yellow hills run along the river, breaking down to it in cliffs of limestone, the strata perfectly horizontal —cliffs not high enough to be fine, with never a wood, and seldom a village. The stream itself, though wider than it was above, hardly seems so, on account of the numerous arms, enclosing low woody islands, into which it divides itself. Hearing that it was still more monotonous farther down towards Astrakhan, and that that city, spite of its high-sounding Oriental name, was only a second-rate modern Russian town, full of dried fish and fever, we determined to quit the steamer at Saratof,[1] and travel thence to the Caucasus by railway, running first west into the heart of the country, and then south across the great steppe to the Sea of Azof. By this time nearly all the cabin passengers had gone, but the lower deck was still crowded with Armenians and Persians bound for Astrakhan, whence they were to proceed, by another steamer of the same company, across the Caspian to Baku in Transcaucasia, or to Lenkoran on the frontiers of Persia. We took leave with some regret of these picturesque groups and of the majestic stream, which we never expected to see again ; and, landing at Saratof, climbed the high brown hills that rise above it to take a last look over the solemn eastern steppe, still for the most part left to the rude tribes of Kirghiz and Bashkirs that wander over it with their flocks and

[1] Pronounced Sarātof.

their tents of felt, but destined, such is the fertility of its soil, to wave one day from end to end with luxuriant harvests.

Travellers are fond of talking of the Oriental character of Russia; and though the smart saying about scratching Russians and finding Tatars is pretty well exploded (nobody can be essentially less like a Tatar than the Russian is), there are, no doubt, certain points, mostly mere externals, in which Russian towns, or Russian usages, recall those of the East. For instance, the cupolas of churches are covered outside with tiles or iron plates of gay colours, and in the interior the most honourable places are the corners, in which, therefore, czars, patriarchs, and other great folk, are buried. The houses (except in the greatest cities) are low, buying and selling goes on chiefly in the bazaars, the horses carry loud jangling bells, people prostrate themselves at worship, instead of merely bowing or kneeling; and when you ask for water, they do not give you a basin, but they pour water on your hands. Such resemblances as these are only natural; the wonder is, considering that Russia had for many centuries closer relations with the East than with the West, that there are not many more of them. What is far more curious is to find on the Volga so many things and ways in Russia which remind one of America; points of resemblance between nations apparently as far removed from one another in manners, religion, history, and government, as they are in space. I amused myself in noting down some of these points of resemblance—those which are merely

external and accidental, as well as those which really have a meaning—and give the list for what it is worth.

Both are big countries. Their extent is immense, and everything in them is on a vast scale—rivers, forests, lakes, distances. One thinks little of a journey of a thousand miles. Land, being so abundant, is of little value ; hence, partly, it is that in both a town covers so great an area, with its wide streets, its gardens, its unutilized open spaces. Hence we find in the middle of settled districts ground that has never been touched by plough, or spade, or axe. Hence agriculture is apt to be wasteful, because, when the soil grows less productive, he who tills it can move elsewhere.

Both are new countries. Although the Russian race and kingdom are old enough, they have occupied most of their present territory no longer than our colonists America, while they have been learning the arts of civilization only since the days of Peter the Great, and have acquired them very imperfectly even now. Material development is therefore still incomplete, and is the first thing in every one's thoughts, the thing to which the energies of the people are mainly devoted. Literature and science have struck root, but have not yet had time to grow high or spread their branches. Things are still pretty much in the rough,—have what we should call a colonial air about them ; streets are ill-paved, public buildings are unfinished, there is a mixture of magnificent designs with imperfect accomplishment. It is chiefly raw material that the country produces, timber, corn, and

cattle; the finer kinds of manufacture are still backward, and so, on the whole, is art. The general want of settledness is seen in the ease with which the population move from place to place. Single workmen wander over the whole country; a peasant family thinks little of migrating from the central provinces to the steppes of the far south.

Both are countries whose interest lies in the future rather than in the past. Indeed Russia has less of a past than America, seeing that the latter has the past of England, whereas Russian history is a very twilight sort of business till the great Polish war of the sixteenth century. Names of czars and patriarchs can be given, and a few famous battles fixed, but in the main it is an uncertain as well as dreary record of family quarrels between savage princes and incessant border warfare with the Tatar hordes. Russia has comparatively few great characters or great historic scenes to look back to; all the more, therefore, must she look forward and scan the new horizon that rises towards her. Like America, she sees a prodigious territory, much of it wonderfully fertile, magnificent stores of minerals, undeveloped regions lying beyond the limits of her present settlements; and she cannot but indulge in many schemes and fancies for the future. An educated Russian, like an American, is penetrated by a sense of the great destiny reserved for his country, and is apt to carry the sort of sanguine temperament which this feeling breeds into his private concerns. People venture boldly, live expensively, enjoy and indulge the moment, confident that things will some-

how come right in the long run. No nations are so fond of speculating, writing and talking about themselves[1]; readers of Turgenef need only be reminded of what goes on among the Russians at Baden-Baden, in his famous novel 'Smoke,' which gave so much offence at home. Not unconnected with this is their tendency to sudden impressions and waves of feeling. Naturally a susceptible, perhaps an inconstant, certainly an impatient, people, the Russians are apt to be intoxicated by the last new idea or doctrine; and their lively sympathy makes a feeling, belief, enthusiasm, that has once been started, spread like wild-fire through the whole educated, sometimes even down into the uneducated, class. This is less the case in America, but several of the political and social movements we can remember there, like Know-nothingism and (in a somewhat different way) the women's whisky war, seem to illustrate the same kind of temper.

Being new, and feeling themselves new, both are extremely sensitive to the opinion of older countries, and anxious sometimes to compel, more often to conciliate, the admiration of their neighbours. In Russia, as in America, the first question put to the stranger is, "What do you think of our country?" and an appreciative answer is received with a thrill of pleasure which a German or an English breast would never experience on the like occasion. With all their patriotic self-confidence, they have a consciousness of having but just entered the circle of civilization, and are pleased to be re-assured. They are, therefore, like

[1] This, however, has very much diminished in America of late years.

the Americans, eager to learn what foreigners think of them, they do everything they can to set off the good points of the country, both physical and social; and they are apt to be unduly annoyed at hostile criticism, even when it proceeds from foolish or ignorant people. It is partly perhaps for the same reason, as well as from the dominant officialism, that they are more particular in some small points of social etiquette (the wearing a black coat, for instance, or the use of appropriate titles in addressing a comparative stranger) than people are in countries where the rules of etiquette are so old that every educated man may be assumed to know them. It does not satisfy them that their material greatness should be fully admitted; they wish to be recognized as the equals of Western Europe in social and intellectual progress, and insist, as many American writers used to do, on their mission to diffuse new economical and social principles.

Among minor points of similarity that strike one, may be named the mysterious element that underlies their politics—here, as in America, one hears a great deal of talk about secret societies, and cannot quite make out what these societies amount to (I do not believe they are really dangerous to the Government); the attitude of women, who are here more aspiring, independent, and, in the slang sense of the term, "advanced," than anywhere else in Europe; the development of strange sects, such as the Duchobortz and Molokans, and semi-religious, semi-socialist communities; the forwardness of children, who are much more seen and indulged than in France or Germany; the costliness of inns, of living, of manufactured

goods, indeed of almost everything except locomotion; the corruption of officials (or at least the general belief in such corruption, for whether it really exists I do not venture to pronounce); even the structure of railway cars and steamboats, which seems to have been borrowed from America, and is certainly preferable to what one finds in the rest of Europe; and, lastly, the general good-nature and easy-going friendly ways of the people, who, like the Americans, are far more willing to make friends with and do their best for a stranger, if only he will shew some little politeness and some little interest in the country, than are either the French, or the Germans, or ourselves.

Of course I am not insensible to the many striking contrasts between the two nations, the most striking of which is that in Russia there is, speaking broadly, no middle class, but only an upper and a lower, and that lower almost entirely uneducated and politically powerless. In America there is nothing but middle-class, a middle-class which is well-taught, intelligent, political to the marrow of its bones. Any one can draw out for himself all the differences which flow from this one, and from the singular unlikeness of religions. But the curious thing is to find in the face of these differences so many points of resemblance.

Saratof is one of the largest towns in Russia—that is to say, it has a population of 80,000 people, scattered over a space of some four or five miles square, the meanest streets being as wide as Regent Street, and the main ones twice as wide. It lies high above the Volga in a shelf-like recess among the bare hills, burnt

up in August to a dismal brown, and so dry that a dust-cloud raised by the least wind is perpetually hanging over the town, just as smoke-clouds do over Sheffield or Manchester. Like most towns in Russia, it has absolutely nothing in the way of a sight, not even a provincial museum or an old church; everything is modern, common-place, and uninteresting, and life itself, one would think, must partake of the same character. The only thing to remember it by, besides its splendid situation, looking out over the Volga and the great steppe, was the more than usually large proportion of Germans among the people, a lucky thing for the traveller asking his way, and one which gave to many of the houses an appearance of snug neatness distinctly Teutonic; for though your Slav is sometimes magnificent, he is rarely comfortable. All this part of Russia, down the river as far as Tzaritsyn, is full of German colonies, planted by Catherine II. in the hope that they would teach cleanliness, neatness, and comfort, and, above all, good methods of agriculture, to their Russian neighbours—a hope which has not been realized, for they have remained for the most part quite distinct, living in their own villages, not intermarrying with the Muscovites, often remaining ignorant of their language. By far the most prosperous of these colonies belong to the Mennonite or Moravian persuasions, who thrive as the Quaker colonists throve in America. But now one hears that they are mostly leaving Russia altogether, fearing the enforcement of the new law of universal conscription. To them, who hold war a

sin, service in the army is a more serious evil than emigration to Canada; and they appeal to the promise Catherine made that they should never be so required to violate their conscientious scruples. The government is perplexed: it does not wish to break faith, but, like all governments, it hates making exceptions, especially invidious exceptions in favour of people who do not hold the national faith.

At Saratof we took the railway which carried us with only two changes of carriage all the way to the foot of the Caucasus, a journey of 1100 miles, which occupied from Sunday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon. We had intended to descend the Volga as far as Tzaritsyn, cross over to the Don at Kalatch, and descend the Don by steamer; but finding that there was only one, or at most two steamers a week on the Don, that the steamer would probably have started from Kalatch just before we arrived there, that the duration of her voyage could not even be guessed at, since most of the time was spent in getting her off the sandbanks on which she was constantly grounding, and finally that the only way of escaping the voracious crowds of mosquitoes was to fling oneself into the river, which, however, was too shallow to afford the relief of drowning, we abandoned this idea, and preferred even the fatigue of seventy continuous hours in a railway car. Fortunately that fatigue turned out a great deal less than we had expected. In no country, except America, is railway travelling so easy, I might almost say enjoyable, as in Russia, if only you are not in a

hurry to get over the ground. The cars have a passage down the middle, and a little platform at each end where you may stand when the dust is not too distressing. The seats, even in the second class, are wide, low, and comfortable, and they can be pulled out in such a way as to form an excellent couch, where one can sleep soundly all night long. In the first class there are luxurious couches, both for night and day. The pace never exceeds, and seldom reaches, twenty miles an hour, so that one is not much shaken, and can read without injury to the eyes. Excellent refreshment-rooms are provided at intervals of three or four hours, at all of which the passengers dismount and take a hearty meal, washed down by vodka or by countless glasses of lemon-flavoured tea, weak no doubt, but of a flavour such as one never gets in an English hotel. One has ample time, not only to eat at these stations, but to get out and walk up and down at most of the others. Except upon such lines as that from St. Petersburg to Moscow, or Moscow to Nijni Novgorod, the number of passengers is not so great as to crowd the carriage, and you can generally find somebody who talks French or German (most probably a German himself), and is pleased at the opportunity of airing his knowledge. Partly from these facilities for moving about, partly from the interest of seeing a new bit of country, we stepped out of the train after three nights and three days less tired than one usually is by a journey from London to Edinburgh.

The scenery of this vast region, which the Don and

its tributaries drain, is intensely monotonous, so monotonous that its uniformity almost rises to grandeur. From Saratof the railway climbs the slope of the hills that border the Volga, whose bed is here little above the ocean (the Caspian being, as everybody knows, some eighty feet below the Black Sea), and comes out on a wide slightly rolling upland, not wholly unlike the country round Newmarket, only that it is more bare of wood. Then it passes through a land most of which is cultivated, and which is, indeed, of extraordinary fertility, for here we are in the famous black soil region, but where scarcely a sign of human life is visible. The villages are few, and a solitary farmhouse is almost unheard of; the Russian peasant is gregarious, and apparently does not mind having to walk a good many miles to his work. The fields are not divided, or rather there are no fields at all, but one vast open space, in which the different crops run in long parallel patches, corn and buckwheat predominating. The greenness of Northern Russia is utterly gone: everything is dry, bare, dusty; a stream seldom appears, and when it does, is muddy and sluggish. The houses of the peasantry, which further north towards the forest country are always of wood, are here mostly of clay, strengthened possibly by a few bricks or wattles. They are wretched enough, yet not so much worse than those of our agricultural labourers on backward estates. Sometimes one sees on the skirts of a village a pretty large farm standing not without evidences of wealth, but there is mostly an untidy look about it—haystacks tumbling over, fences

ill-kept, nothing trim or finished. The bucolic Russian has no gift for neatness, any more than his urban brother has for comfort.

As the line runs farther west, past Tambof, famous for its horses, Kozlof,[1] a junction for a line from the north, and Griazi, a still greater junction, where the train from Moscow to the Caucasus joins us, the country grows flatter and also somewhat better wooded. Between Griazi and Voronej, the next considerable place, one runs through an unbroken forest of beech for eight or ten miles, a forest, however, as is mostly the case in Russia, whose trees do not exceed twenty-five or thirty feet in height, and which has therefore nothing of forest gloom or forest grandeur about it; it is only land covered with trees. After Voronej, a handsome-looking town which runs along the steep westerly bank of the Don—here, too, as on the Volga, the right bank is the steep one—the woods finally disappear, and one enters the true steppe, that strange, solitary, dreary region, whose few features it is so easy to describe in words, but the general impression of which I do not know how to convey. Our train traversed it during an entire afternoon, night, and day, from Voronej to Rostof, at the mouth of the Don, so

[1] *A propos* of Kozlof, a story is told in Russia to illustrate the dominance of the Germans, and the supposed dislike to them of the present heir to the throne, which is as follows. At a review a great number of officers were being presented to the Czarevitch. One after another comes forward bearing a German name, till at length the name of a certain Lieutenant Kozlof is called out. "At last a Russian," cried the heir to the throne. "Lieutenant Kozlof, I wish you success in your career."

the impression had time to sink in. The northern half of it is perfectly flat, as flat as a table or a pancake, and is mostly all cultivated, being, indeed, as rich a bit of soil as there is in Europe. The corn had all been reaped when we passed, but even from the stubble one could partly judge how heavy the harvest had been, and where the plough was at work could admire the deep black friable loam which has gone on till now, and will go on for many a year to come, producing noble crops without the aid of manure. Further south the country rises into a great waving table-land, not unlike some parts of the Sussex downs or the moors of Western Yorkshire, traversed by long broad-backed ridges between which lie wide shallow hollows. Here, except in the river bottoms, the land is mostly untouched by cultivation, some of it roamed over by sheep and oxen, much of it altogether desolate, all of it open and unenclosed. It is fertile in the main, and would support a population almost as large again as that of Russia is now. Whatever Russia may want, she does not want land, and has no occasion to annex Bulgaria or Armenia, or any other country to provide an outlet for her superfluous children. No rock appears, except here and there a tiny chalk cliff, and farther south beds of sandstone and shale in the railway cuttings; no tree, except willows and poplars along the streams, and occasionally some bushes round one of the few villages that nestle in the hollows; no detached houses anywhere. Hour after hour the train journeys on through a silent wilderness of brown scorched grass

and withered weeds,[1] climbing or descending in long sweeps the swelling downs, now catching sight of a herd of cattle in the distance, now caught by a dust storm which the strong wind drives careering over the expanse, but with the same unchanging horizon all round, the same sense of motion without progress, which those who have crossed the ocean know so well. Even now, with a bright sun overhead, the dreariness and loneliness were almost terrible; what must they be in winter, when north-eastern gales howl over the waste of snow? Yet even in this dreariness there is a certain strange charm. Looking from one of these billowy ridge-tops across the vast expanse, with the wide blue sky vaulted over it, full of that intense luminous clearness which marks the East, glowing at sunrise and sunset with the richest hues, you come to feel that there is a beauty of the plain not less solemn and inspiring than that of the mountain.

Traversing this steppe for two whole days enables one to understand the kind of impression that Scythia made on the imagination of the Greeks: how all sorts of wonders and horrors, like those Herodotus relates, were credible about the peoples that roamed over these wilds; how terrible to their neighbours, how inaccessible and unconquerable themselves, they must have seemed to the natives of the sunny shores of the

[1] The plants appeared, so far as one could make them out from the train, to be still mostly of British genera. There were several *Polygonaceae* and *Labiatae*, an *Artemisia*, a pretty purplish *Statice*, a small-flowered, much-branching *Dianthus*, and everywhere *Achillaea millefolium*, which seems to be the commonest of all weeds in Russia.

Ægean. One realizes also how emphatically this is the undefended side of Europe, the open space through which all the Asiatic hordes, Huns, Alans, Avars, Bulgarians, Mongols entered, their cavalry darting over the steppe in search of enemies or booty, their waggons following with their families and cattle, unchecked, except now and then by some great river, which, if it were too deep to ford, they crossed upon inflated skins. One understands what was the nature of the warfare that raged for so many centuries here between the Russians of Moscow and Kief, gradually pushing forward to the south and east, and the nomad tribes, whom they slowly subdued or dispossessed—Khazars, Polovtzi, Petchenegs, Komans, Tatars of various names, who were wont to scour across these plains on horseback plundering and burning every outlying settlement, and returning to the banks of the Volga or the Lower Don before the Russians had gathered to resist them. And turning from the past to the future, one speculates on the aspect which this vast and fertile territory will present a century or two hence when it has been all brought under cultivation, when populous towns will have arisen, when coal mines will have been opened, and yellow harvests be waving all over these now lonely downs. If Russia is then still Russia, a nation one in sentiment and faith, swayed by a single will, she may have become a tremendous power in the world. But, meantime, colonization goes on slowly; the future of the Russian government and people is out of all prediction, and Europe

itself may have changed in some way that would make our present calculations vain. One need not be too sanguine or too apprehensive of the future when it is remembered that about the future there is only one thing that can be positively asserted, to wit, that it will turn out not in the least like what the shrewdest observers expect. Of all the prophecies that philosophers or statesmen have made, from Aristotle to De Tocqueville, how many have come true? It is hard enough to say what ought to be done next year; and next century may surely be left to take care of itself. Moral and social causes are so much more powerful than physical ones, or, to speak more exactly, so often turn physical causes in an unexpected direction, that there is really no reason why an Englishman or a German should look on the material growth of Russia with alarm.

As one approaches the Sea of Azof, the steppe descends pretty steeply towards the south, and near the low ground forms some little cliffs which may perhaps be the origin of the name Κρήμνοι (the Crags) which Herodotus gives to the emporium of the Greek traders in Scythia, at the north-east corner of the Maeotis. Here, at the modern town of Rostof, the Don comes down, a broad muddy stream that dawdles along through a mesh of sandbanks to that wretched Sea of Azof which the ancients, considering its shallowness, and the fact that its water is almost quite fresh, more appropriately called a marsh. It is even shallower now than it was then, and grows shallower every year, not only by the action of the

Don pouring in mud, but also by that of the sea captains who sail up to Taganrog or Rostof for corn. Having no cargo to fetch with them, they mostly come "in ballast," and this ballast they fling overboard somewhere between the Straits of Kertch and Taganrog, thus forming shoals all along the track of navigation, on which the next comer runs aground. The government has threatened penalties on those who are detected, but detection is no easy matter. The trade from the Don is not only in corn, shipped here in vast quantities, but also in wine, which is pretty largely grown along the lower course of the stream, and is very tolerable drinking. It is consumed almost entirely by the Russians, who are especially fond of the effervescing sort which they call Don champagne. Nowhere in European Russia, except here and in the Crimea, some of whose wines are excellent, does the grape seem to be regularly cultivated.

A dense haze filled the air as we crossed the Don, caused either by the dust-storms which the wind raised, or by the smoke of steppe-fires, and cut off such view towards the sea as the flatness of the ground would have permitted. Soon we were again in the grassy wilderness, hundreds of miles wide, that lies between the Don and the Caucasus. Fires were blazing all over the steppe, whether accidental or lit for the sake of improving the pasture, I do not know; the effect, at any rate, was extremely fine when night came on, though the grass was too short to give either the volume of blaze or the swift progress

which makes a prairie fire so splendid and terrible. I say "grass" from habit, but in reality it is rather weeds than a carpet of herbage that are to be found on the steppe, at least in autumn; weeds whose flowers, especially one of a clear light yellow which reminded me of a small hollyhock, pleasantly diversify the plain, but which seldom rise over two feet from the ground. However, as they have gone on living and dying and burying themselves for myriads of years on this soil, they must have accumulated a considerable depth of vegetable mould, of which the settler now reaps the benefit. All this country is now beginning to be settled, not indeed at an American pace, but sufficiently for a visitor who returns every fifth or sixth year to notice the difference. There are so few villages visible that one finds it hard to know where the settlers live; however, the sight of haycocks right and left of the line, and less frequently of stubble fields whence the corn has just been lifted, proves well enough that inhabitants there must be somewhere. Though every ten or fifteen miles there is a station, a station does not in Russia imply that there is any likelihood of passengers; it is a place for the train to stop, for tumblers of tea to be consumed, for people to stretch themselves, for the station-master to exchange remarks with the engine-driver. There is but one train in the day; so its arrival is something of an event in the neighbourhood, and not to be treated lightly. Few of these stations had villages attached. All through this region, as elsewhere in Russia, one never sees a solitary house, or even a

group of houses, and unless a village happens to be in sight, the country seems, according to the season, a green or a brown wilderness, unbroken by tree or hedge. Hereabouts there is not even the chance of seeing a wandering horde of Kalmucks, for that interesting race, who are nearly all Buddhists, and, as most ethnologists hold, of Mongol stock, dislike the neighbourhood of Russian colonists, and keep more to the east along the Lower Volga, and by the shores of the Caspian, where the steppe is mostly salt, and therefore less fit for agriculture. It was a disappointment not to meet with this last remnant of the hosts of Zinghis Khan, dwelling in felt tents, and worshipping the Dalai Lama; but the world is large, and one cannot see everything in it.

As we get southward, the country grows rather more uneven, and long smooth ridges, mostly of gravel, but sometimes shewing sections of sandstone or limestone strata, where a gully, the bed of some winter stream, has cut through them, run across the plain. There are few rivers, but a good many muddy ponds, in which cattle are trying to find refuge from the scorching air. Who they belong to does not appear, for the long straggling villages of mud-built rudely-thatched houses come at intervals of many miles. Hitherto there had been no sign of the proximity of the Caucasus, except the sight of the strong flood of the Kuban, whose muddy white, ugly in itself, but lovely to the eyes of a mountaineer, proclaimed it glacier-born. But now, some eighteen hours after we had left Rostof, several sharp craggy hills of

limestone rose on the southern horizon, and behind them, dimly seen under brooding clouds, appeared a huge mass of high land, stretching east and west further than the eye could follow. It was the Caucasus, and all the weariness of the steppe and the railway was forgotten in a moment, when, after the two thousand miles of plain we had traversed from the Gulf of Bothnia hither, we saw the majestic chain unroll itself before us.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAUCASUS.

IN the days of the Crimean War, when the Caucasus first drew the attention of the Western world, Englishmen mostly thought of it as a chain of snowy mountains running from the Straits of Kertch to the Caspian Sea, inhabited by a race of patriotic heroes and beautiful women, called Circassians, who maintained perpetual strife against the encroaching Muscovite. Since then travellers have begun to penetrate it, and some of our own countrymen have even scaled its loftiest summits. But our conceptions are still so vague that there will be no harm in making some general remarks on the range before I describe what I saw in traversing it.

It is really a chain, that is to say, a long and comparatively narrow strip of high land sloping steeply both ways from its central axis; whereas many of our so-called mountain ranges are rather, like the Himalayas, the edges of plateaux, or, like the Andes, themselves a vast plateau with isolated eruptive masses scattered over its surface. It is, however, by no means, as the old maps represent it, a uniform chain, but rather consists of three sufficiently well marked

divisions. First, we have the western section, lying along the Black Sea coast, where it is comparatively low, indeed, in the north-west little more than a line of insignificant hills, and mostly covered with wood. The first considerable heights begin about the fort of Gagri, fifty miles west-north-west of Sukhum Kaleh, where one peak reaches 9000 feet. Next comes the central section, from the neighbourhood of Sukhum Kaleh, a well-known Black Sea port, eastward as far as Mount Kazbek and the Dariel Pass. This is the loftiest and grandest part, having many summits that rise far above the line of perpetual snow, and at least seven exceeding 15,000 feet, deep and gloriously wooded valleys; ample seas of ice surrounding the great peaks. Lastly, there is the eastern section, which is almost conterminous with (and which I shall therefore call by the name of) Daghestan, the "Mountain Land," extending from the Dariel Pass to the Caspian Sea. Here the heights are not quite so great, though three or four peaks exceed 13,000 feet, and one, the extinct volcano of Basarjusi, reaches 14,722 feet. There is of course, therefore, much less snow and ice. The range splits, throwing out, some forty miles east of the Dariel road, a great spur to the north-east, crowned by several lofty glacier peaks, while the main axis runs south-east at a uniform elevation of 10,000 or 11,000 feet, till it rises for the last time in the summit of Basarjusi. In the angle between the above mentioned spur and the main chain lies Daghestan, a wide table-land, intersected by profound gorges, itself mostly bare of wood, but throwing off to the north a

sort of buttress of hilly country, which sinks gradually into the great Kalmuck Steppe. Approaching the Caspian, the declivities become gentler, the summits lower, the country altogether more open; so that here the people dwelling to the south found it necessary to protect themselves from the irruptions of the barbarous tribes of the northern steppe by the erection of a mighty rampart, the so-called Caucasian Wall, remains of which may still be seen near the port of Derbend, on the Caspian coast.

The length of the whole mountain country, from Taman, on the Sea of Azov, to the peninsula of Apsheron, on the Caspian, is about 800 miles; its greatest width, in Daghestan, about 120.

Orographically, the most remarkable features of the Caucasus are the simplicity of its structure, the steepness of its declivities, and its great persistent altitude through the central and eastern sections. Unlike the Alps and the Rocky Mountains, it does not throw out, or rather split up into, any long secondary ranges parallel to one another; I mean such ranges as the Bernese Alps or the great Vorarlberg ridge to the north of the Inn. Nearly all the higher branch chains, and by consequence nearly all the valleys, are at right angles to the main axis, and are therefore comparatively short. All the loftiest summits are on or close to the watershed, which may be taken as being in the Caucasus generally coincident with the axis of elevation. One may conclude from this that the elevating forces acted (again speaking generally, for there are exceptions) along one or two

lines only,[1] and acted there with an intensity which is fairly represented by the prodigious height of the great summits. Several of these, and notably Elbruz and Kazbek, are volcanic, both composed of trachyte, and Elbruz—according to Mr. Freshfield, who, with Messrs. Tucker and Moore, first ascended it—showing traces of a crater at the top. The other great peaks of the central section, such as Koschtantau, are believed to be mostly granitic; while in Daghestan it is asserted that limestone rocks are found to form nearly all the loftiest summits. Every one knows that the height of the peaks of a mountain chain is quite a different thing from the average height of its watershed. In the Pyrenees, for instance, the average of the watershed is higher than in the Alps, though the tops are very much lower. In the Caucasus this persistency of elevation is even more remarkable. For some two hundred miles east from Sukhum Kaleh, there is no point where the range sinks below 8000 feet, and very few where it is nearly as low; whereas in the Alps one has a good many passes across the main chain between 4000 and 5000 feet high. The consequence of this is that there are only two passes across the Caucasus which are practically used by travellers, those of the Dariel and the Mamisson (a little farther west than the Dariel), and only one, the

[1] The geological structure of the chain is still imperfectly known; but there seems reason to believe that in the central section there are two parallel axes of upheaval not far apart from one another, the northernmost of which is also, in the western part of that section, the watershed, while farther east the southern axis divides the stream heads.

Dariel, which is traversed by a road practicable for wheeled carriages.

These physical features naturally impress a peculiar character upon the scenery of the Caucasus. First of all, they give it a certain want of variety. You do not, as in the Alps, see, when you reach a lofty point of outlook, snow mountains lying all around you in different ranges or knots; as, from the Aeggischhorn, one sees the Finsteraarhorn and Jungfrau group to the north, and the icy giants of Zermatt to the south, or as, from the Sasso di Pelmo or Marmolata in the Venetian Alps, with snow-capped summits rising on either hand, you can trace the vast arc of Noric and Rhaetian snows from the Tauern of Gastein to the far-off crags of the Ortler. There is not the same richness of re-grouping among the great mountains, discerned from different points, as one has among the numerous parallel chains of the Alps. Then, secondly, there is a complete want of lakes, which usually occur where a ridge more or less parallel to the axis turns the course of a valley, or at any rate where the general declivity is not very abrupt. No tarn bigger than Buttermere or Loch Achray seems to have been discovered in the whole length of the Caucasus. This defect the rivers do not atone for, since in the central section they are muddy glacier torrents, and in the eastern the dryness of the climate and want of glacier reservoirs leaves them insignificant. And with this there is in many parts a want of the gentler elements of picturesque beauty which act as a foil to the severe grandeur of snow landscapes

and inner gorges of the mountains, relieve the mind from their gloom and terror, and enable it to return with fresh enjoyment to scenery that taxes all its powers.

Against these drawbacks there are to be set the magnificent scale on which the Caucasus is built, and the extraordinary boldness of its lines. On the north, especially, it rises in some places like a wall, the snowy tops seeming to run down with a steeply falling, unbroken ridge into the dead flat of the steppe. The gorges are deeper and more savage, the summits mount with a more imposing steepness, than one sees elsewhere in Europe; and in some of the southern valleys, especially those of the Ingur and Kodor, to the south-west of Elbruz, the forests have a tropical luxuriance, for which no parallel can be found nearer than India or South America. What Dr. Hooker, in his 'Himalayan Journals' (most delightful among books of scientific travel), says of the Himalayas as compared with the Alps is true of the Caucasus also, though in a less degree. They are not so beautiful as the Alps, but they are more majestic. One is less charmed, but more awed. And this impression of awe is heightened by the fact, that in the Caucasus there is so much less of human life and history than in the Alps. Instead of groups of cheerful *châlets*, surrounded by herds of cattle browsing on the lofty pastures up to the very edge of the glacier, one finds either solitude or at most a dingy stone or log-built hut. Few corn-fields are seen waving in the valleys, such as the climber descries from the summit of the

Jungfrau or the Tödi. There are no passes that have echoed to the tramp of armies; no towns, *congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis*, that have been the strongholds of ancient freedom or the bulwarks of hostile empires. Nature alone speaks to the traveller, and speaks in her sternest accents.

Nevertheless, the Caucasus has a profound historical importance, and that importance depends in a remarkable manner on the peculiar physical character which I have endeavoured to describe. It is just because the chain is so steep and with an axis so uninterruptedly lofty that it has formed in all ages an impassable barrier between the nomad peoples who roamed over the northern steppes and the more civilized and settled races dwelling to the south, in the valleys of the Kur and Aras, the Phasis and the Euphrates. From the beginning of history the Caucasus is to the civilized nations, both Greek and Oriental, the boundary of geographical knowledge—indeed, the boundary of the world itself. Beyond it all is fable and mystery, not only to Herodotus, but even to Strabo and Ptolemy. Pompey, in the last Mithridatic war, led the Roman legions as far as its southern foot, defeating the Iberians in a battle near the spot where the Dariel road emerges from the mountains above Tiflis. Some centuries later, the armies of Justinian repeatedly disputed with those of Chosroes Nushirvan the possession of Imeritia, and sometimes advanced their outposts far up into the gorges of the hills above Gori and Suram. But neither Roman nor Persian ever crossed to the north,

or endeavoured to hold any part of the mountain country in permanent subjection. So, too, the waves of barbarian conquest that successively descended from the Ural and the Altai across the plains of the Caspian fretted and foamed in vain against this gigantic wall, and were forced to seek their ingress to the southern countries either to the east of the Caspian into Iran, or round the northern shores of the Black Sea towards the Danube valley. In this respect there is a singular contrast between the case of the Alps and that of the Caucasus. Since the days when the Rhaetians saw Drusus, "like the bird that bears Jove's thunderbolt," carrying war into the valleys of the Inn and Drave, there has never been a time (save during the seventh and eighth centuries), down till the cession of Venetia in 1866, when regions on both sides of the Alps have not, either practically or nominally, formed parts of the same empire—Roman, or Romano-Germanic, or Austrian; whereas the countries immediately to the north and south of the Caucasus have never obeyed the same ruler (except, perhaps, in the lifetime of Zinghis Khan), until Russia established herself in Georgia at the beginning of this century. So, too, while commerce has in all ages gone on pretty briskly across the Alps, there has been none, so far as can be made out, over the few and difficult passes which the Caucasus presents. Greek traders from the colonies on the Pontic coast penetrated to the foot of the mountains long before the Christian era, as Genoese traders did in the middle ages; but we hear of no one crossing them or ex-

ploring their recesses. What little trade there was crept up by Derbend, between the Caspian and the hills, from Persia to the north. In them, as in the other mysterious boundary of the ancient world, the Pillars of Hercules, the Greeks laid the scene of mythological exploits and marvels. Colchis, to which the Argo sailed, lay under their shadow; Prometheus was chained to one of their towering rocks; near them dwelt the man-hating Amazons; beyond them gold-guarding griffins and one-eyed Arimaspians carried on perpetual war. So it remained for many centuries, down to the days of Marco Polo and Mandeville, in the east as well as in the west. Readers of the Arabian Nights will remember that there Mount Kaf is the limit of the world, and the usual threat of a magician to an obstinate sultan is, "I will transport thy city beyond Mount Kaf, and transform all the people in it into stones."

It is true, no doubt, that this complete absence, down till quite recent times, of knowledge about the Caucasus, and of attempts to carry trade or conquest into it from the south, is partly due to the uninviting nature of the countries beyond, and to the fact that, so far as trade was concerned, even the stormy Euxine provided an easier route to Scythia. But a good deal must be ascribed to the peculiarly difficult and impracticable character of the chain itself, which not only stopped armies and caravans, but kept the inhabitants in a state of isolation and barbarism. One of the most remarkable characteristics of the Caucasus is that, while it has acted as a barrier be-

tween the north and the south, stopping and turning aside the movements of population, it has also preserved within its sheltered recesses fragments of the different peoples who from time to time have passed by it, or who have been driven by conquest into it from the lower country. Thus it is a kind of ethnological museum, where specimens may be found of countless races and languages, some of which probably belong to the early ages of the world; races that seem to have little affinity with their present neighbours, and of whose history we know nothing except what comparative philology can reveal. Even before the Christian era it was famous for the variety of its peoples. Herodotus says:—

"Along the west side of the Caspian Sea stretches the Caucasus, which is of all mountains both the greatest in extent and the loftiest in height. It contains many and various nations, living mostly on the fruits of wild trees."

Strabo describes the Caucasus as inhabited by an immense number of different tribes, speaking different tongues, and many of them very savage. He reports the story that seventy such tribes resort, chiefly to buy salt, to the Greek trading station of Dioscurias, on the Euxine coast, of whom the bravest and most powerful are the ferocious Soanes, and tells how in summer the natives climb the mountains shod with shoes of ox-hide, their soles full of spikes to give them a hold upon the ice. Many of them are troglodytes, he adds, who, owing to the cold, dwell in holes. Some use poisoned arrows. Another writer says that some are cannibals

—there is at any rate a consensus as to their ferocity. And Procopius, writing under Justinian, when the region might have been comparatively well known, declares that on the top of the mountains there never falls either snow or rain, because they are above the highest clouds.

No more inappropriate ethnological name was ever propounded than that of Caucasian for a fancied division of the human family, the cream of mankind, from which the civilized peoples of Europe are supposed to have sprung. For the Caucasus is to-day as it was in Strabo's time, full of races differing in religion, language, aspect, manners, character; races so numerous and still so little known that I shall not attempt to do more than mention some of the most important.

In Daghestan, the "mountain land" *par excellence*, the most numerous race, and one of the finest races anywhere, is the Lesghian, whose number, including minor allied tribes, is estimated at 560,000. They are all Sunni Mohammedans, and devout Mohammedans, a people profoundly religious, among whom Shamyl found his chief support, and whom he ruled chiefly through their zeal for that enthusiastic form of their faith which went by the name of Muridism, a sort of revived Islamism, not unlike that of the Wahabis in Arabia. It began with the preaching of a certain Kazi Mollah, about the year 1823. The word Murid is said to mean "teaching disciple." Shamyl himself was by birth of a tribe apparently akin to the Lesghian stock, named Avars, whom one may fancy to be a branch, left behind in its old dwelling-

place, of the great nomad nation which held Pannonia (Hungary) from the sixth to the eighth century, and which, after being for some generations the terror of the Greeks, Franks, and Italians, was finally subdued or extinguished by Charlemagne. These Avars are said, alone among these peoples, to have a regular literary language, which, however, is written in Persian characters. Here in Daghestan many of the tribes occupy only one or two valleys, yet remain distinct in language and customs from their neighbours, and may probably remain so for centuries to come, an inexhaustible field for the ethnologist. North-west of the Lesghians, towards Vladikavkaz, is the large Mohammedan tribe Tchetchens, and beyond them the Ingushes, while south-west of Lesghistan, towards the Dariel Pass, dwell the Hessurs, or Chewsurs, a small people, who still array themselves in helmets and chain armour, carry shields and spears, and declare themselves descended from the Crusaders, though how Crusaders should have come there they do not explain. The truth seems to be that they wear, being nominally Christians, small crosses of red or black cloth sewed upon their clothes, and that some one, having been struck by the similarity of this to the Crusaders' usage, set the tale a-going.

On both sides of the chain to the west of the Dariel road, are the Ossèts, a people partly Christian, partly Mohammedan, partly pagan, speaking an Indo-European tongue, in which some traveller discovered a strong resemblance to German, but which is now generally held to belong to the Iranian group. They

call themselves Ir, or Iron, and number about 30,000.[1] They have been well disposed to the Russians almost from the first, though indulging in occasional robberies, and their position, close to the great line of communication, made their friendship valuable. On the northern slopes of the mountains, between Vladikavkaz and Pjätigorsk, lies the territory of Kabarda, inhabited by Mohammedans speaking a tongue which is generally held to be a branch of the Tcherkess or Circassian,[2] a manly and vigorous race, who have mostly been on good terms with Russia, and some of whose nobles have risen to high places in her army. Still farther west, between the watershed and the Kuban, stretching far to the north-west of Elbruz lay Circassia, inhabited by tribes who called themselves Adighé, and whom the Russians knew as Tcherkesses. They were nearly all Mohammedans, though of rather a loose kind, admirable horsemen and marksmen, living by war and pillage, and leaving to their women such tillage as the character of the country permitted. South of them, in the upper valley of the Ingur, and amid the grandest scenery of the whole Caucasus, dwell the Suans or Svanny, the Soanes of Strabo; and still farther west, on the wooded mountains that border the Euxine all along by Sukhum Kaleh, are the Abhasians, a people supposed to be

[1] Other estimates raise the number of the Ossets to 60,000. The numbers given here are taken from a Russian statistical publication of some reputation, but I dare say they are only rough estimates.

[2] The Kabardans are sometimes, but apparently on insufficient grounds, classed as Circassians. Distinct from both seems to be the small tribe of Tatars who inhabit the upper valley of the Baksan, at the foot of Elbruz.

allied to the Tcherkesses, and sometimes included with them under the Circassian name, but speaking a distinct language. They were converted to Christianity by Justinian, but have since relapsed, some into a loose sort of Mohammedanism, some into paganism. They are the most unmitigated rogues and thieves in the whole Caucasus, whose only occupation, since they were first heard of, has been kidnapping children to sell for slaves, formerly into the Roman and, since its fall, into the Turkish empire. In their country the Turks have lately, in May 1877, effected a landing, and are reported to have been joined by 10,000 mountaineers. As the whole Abhasian population probably does not exceed 70,000, this story must be received with more than distrust. They are, no doubt, disaffected to Russia now, as they were to Turkey formerly, and would be to anybody who should try to check their misdeeds. But they are too wild and unstable to be of the least use in a campaign.

The Muslim peoples of the Caucasus are held by most travellers to be superior in energy and uprightness to the Christians. I saw too little to judge whether this is so, but enough to be sure that the Christianity of the mountain tribes is the merest name. Some, like the Hessurs and the cognate tribes of Pshaws and Tushins, are really polytheists, and worship, besides what they call the Christ-God, a god of war, and gods or "angels" of the earth, the oak, the mountain, and so forth. In fact, their Christianity consists in kissing the cross, in feasting and idling on certain holidays, fasting on others, and in worshipping

deities, some of whom go by the names of Christian saints. Such ceremonies as they have bear traces of Georgian origin; so it is likely enough that the Georgian princes, whose suzerainty they used to acknowledge, were the instruments of their conversion. The Suans worship the Georgian queen Tamara to this day, along with St. George: and the priest—they seem to have a hereditary and illiterate priesthood—repeats fragments of prayers and psalms, and receives a gift for his pains. Bitter blood feuds rage among them, for they are a fierce and passionate race, and seldom rich enough to pay the heavy compensation in cattle which ancient custom entitles the relatives of a slain man to require; hence murders go on from generation to generation exactly as in Corsica till lately, or in Iceland in the days of the old republic.

To write the history of Russian conquest in the Caucasus would lead me too far afield, and would require various geographical elucidations which I have no space for. One remark, however, is worth making, to remove a misconception which was current in England at the time of the Crimean War, when some enterprising spirits proposed that we should use the mountaineers as allies against the Czar Nicholas. There never was any general war in the Caucasus, nor any concerted action among the tribes who defended their independence. We used to talk of the Circassians as a people inhabiting the whole chain, and carrying on war against the Russians, whereas in reality they were only one among many races, the majority of whom were neutral or favourable to

Russia. Although outbursts and disturbances occasionally happened in other places, the struggle was in the main confined to two districts: Daghestan, in the east, where Shamyl, at the head of the Lesghians, and one or two minor cognate tribes, maintained a religious war; and Circassia proper, the country of the Adighé or Tcherkesses, who occupied what I have called the western and lowest section of the chain, and the hilly country lying to the north of it and drained by the Kuban. The intermediate tribes, Tatars of the Baksan valley, and Kabardans, both of whom are Mohammedans, as well as the semi-Christian Ossets, Ingushes, and Suans, were generally quiet, and prevented that co-operation against the Russians which Shamyl more than once tried to bring about. The Tchetchens, who number about 115,000, had given the Czar some trouble, but were mostly reduced to a sullen submission before 1854, being inferior in martial qualities to both Lesghians and Kabardans. Shamyl himself was a great man, crafty and cruel, no doubt, but with a daring, a tenacity, and a fertility of resource that remind one of Abd-el-Kader, and able to raise to a marvellous height the fanaticism of his followers.[1] He was wonderfully eloquent, and added to his reputation for sanctity that of bearing a charmed life, for he had, like Abd-el-Kader, repeatedly escaped when he was believed to have been

[1] A prophet is not an uncommon phenomenon among these peoples. There have been some of late years in Persia; and a quite remarkable one appeared among the Tcherkesses at the end of last century, by name Bey Mansur, who roused his countrymen against the Russians and was captured by them at Anapa in 1790.

killed, and reappeared unhurt in some distant spot. Though he never commanded more than a few thousand warriors, and in his later days only a few hundreds, the physical character of Daghestan, a country of plateaux intersected by profound and narrow gorges, made all the efforts of the Russians fruitless, until they abandoned the plan of regular expeditions against him, and set themselves to hem him in by constructing military roads, and erecting forts which commanded the gorges, and drew a narrowing cordon around him. When his last stronghold, the rock fortress of Gunib, was stormed by the army of Prince Bariatinski, in August 1859, he came down and surrendered like Vercingetorix to Caesar, happily to meet a milder fate, for, after an honourable exile of a few years near Moscow, he was allowed to proceed to Mecca, and died there not long ago.

A little later, in 1864, the Tcherkesses of the west finally submitted. The Russian government, who knew by experience that their marauding propensities were incurable, adopted a plan which was no doubt stern, but may have been necessary. They offered them their choice of quitting the mountains, where they were uncontrollable, and settling in the low country along the Kuban, or else of emigrating into Turkish territory. Numerous envoys from Turkey came among them, and urged the latter course, which was accordingly chosen by the bulk of the nation. Four hundred thousand are said to have come down to the ports whither the Sultan had promised to send vessels to receive them. The vessels, however, like

everything else Turkish, were late in coming, diseases broke out, and a large part of the Tcherkesses died before the embarkation took place. Of those who sailed, the majority were settled in Lazistan, or in Turkish Armenia, north of Erzerum. Of these last, some have been since transferred to Europe, and have played their part in the Bulgarian massacres of 1876. Others are now fighting the Russians, or rather taking the opportunity which the war gives them, of murdering the natives in Armenia. The fate of a nation driven from its ancestral seats cannot but move our sympathy. But there was nothing else in the character or history of the Circassians to justify that sympathy. Their supposed chivalry, like most chivalries, disappeared upon close examination. They lived upon robbery and the sale of their children, and of the ferocity which accompanies their robberies they have given us hideous examples in Bulgaria, and still more recently in the Armenian campaign.

The Tcherkess country is now for the most part uninhabited, though some few of the old inhabitants linger in the valleys or in the Russian towns of the steppe. Its lower parts, along the tributaries of the Kuban, are being colonized by the Russians, but the fevers that infest these wooded valleys have proved very fatal to the new-comers, and the inner hollows of the mountains remain abandoned to the wild bull, largest of European quadrupeds, who ranges unpursued through these vast solitudes. Last autumn all was quiet through the Caucasus from end to end, and a traveller with a couple of Cossacks was safe even among the

warlike Lesghians, many of whom have taken service as irregular cavalry under the Russian flag.[1] The only exception is to be found among the independent Suans before mentioned, who, singularly ill-conditioned fellows as they are, are nevertheless in some ways the most interesting of all the Caucasian races, having preserved many curious primitive customs and forms of ritual. They have resisted several attempts of the Russians to collect taxes from them, and one one of their villages was last summer in a state of armed resistance to the feebly led attacks of a detachment of troops sent against them. Being only some 10,000 in number, they will, of course, be reduced without difficulty as soon as a military road is made into their country, and all the more readily as they live in a state of perpetual feud with one another, village against village, and family against family. There is no political organization. Each man, like the Cyclopes in Homer, rules over his wife and children, and cares nothing for his neighbour.[2]

[1] Since the above was written, an insurrection is reported to have broken out not only in Abhasia, where the Turks have landed, but among the Tchetchens and the Lesghians in Daghestan. It is hard to make out what has really happened; but apparently the rising has not been important there, and will be easily suppressed. So long as the Dariel road is not threatened, Russia need not much care about Daghestan, whose tribes are too far from the Euxine to co-operate with the Turks. The Tcherkesses are all gone from Circassia, and the Abhasians are too fickle and cowardly to constitute any real danger. Indeed, the Turkish troops are now (July 1877) being withdrawn from their country altogether.

[2] For further details regarding these Suans, the curious reader may be referred to 'Central Caucasus' of Mr. Freshfield, whose party was almost the first in recent times to visit their country, and were exposed to some danger from them; to Captain Telfer's 'Crimea and Transcaucasia,' vol. ii. and appendix; and to a work by Dr. Radde, the eminent botanist, entitled 'Die drei Langenhochthäler Imeritiens.'

So far, therefore, as safety to life is concerned, the explorer of the Caucasus has little to fear. But of course there are absolutely no facilities for travelling such as we find in the Alps or even in the Carpathians, no inns, no roads, no guides, and in some regions no beasts of burden. Except that the risk of being eaten or pierced by poisoned arrows is gone, the mountains are much in the same state as they were in the time of Herodotus and Strabo. The Dariel military road, of which more anon, crosses the chain near its centre, and there is, as I have said, a network of roads in one part of Daghestan; otherwise nothing passable by wheels. Here and there a village or a shepherd's hut will shelter the traveller, but often he must depend upon his tent, and, like Virgil's Libyan herdsman, carry all that he wants with him, food, bedding, and weapons; and to do this, he needs a little army of porters, whom it is often troublesome enough to manage.

There is only one part of the Caucasus that has been, as the French say, "utilised" for the purposes of tourists or pleasure seekers, and even that part is not in the Caucasus at all, but in the steppe at the foot of it. This is the mineral water region lying to the south-west of the town of Stavropol, and due north of Mount Elbruz or Minghi Tau,[1] the highest summit of the whole chain. Here four or five little

[1] Minghi Tau (*tau* = *dagh* = mountain) is the true local name, the Tatar name, of this monarch of European mountains (it lies entirely in Europe, north of the watershed). Elbruz is said to be Persian, and is certainly the usual Persian name for the Caucasus and for a mountain chain in general; it is given to the lofty chain which runs round the south and south-east extremity of the Caspian.

bathing-places lie pretty near to one another, the chief of which, Pjätigorsk, is entitled to a few words of description.

To reach Pjätigorsk, one leaves the railway from Rostof to Vladikavkaz at a station called (by interpretation) Mineral Waters, a wooden erection planted right down in the middle of the desolate steppe, and finds some twenty two-horse droshkys drawn up outside, whose drivers are shouting, gesticulating, and jostling one another like so many Irish carmen. It is a long business making a bargain with one of them, for though there is plenty of competition, there is also a trade-union feeling that prices must be kept up in the common interest; and in Russia the driver is generally pretty resolute, and, though he asks at first a great deal more than he expects to get, can never be brought below the minimum he has originally resolved upon. Our experience was that, when the bargain has once been made, he will abide by it, and not try to spring fresh demands upon you. When at last a driver had got us, and embarked our baggage, he set off at full speed over what seemed to be the open steppe, though after a while we discovered from the wheel tracks on it that it was the regular and only road to the most frequented of all the watering-places in the Russian empire. Here, where the neighbouring mountains make the climate moister, the grass was pretty thick and not so utterly brown as farther north. Of flowers, the commonest is a species of *Statice*, growing in large patches, which light up the rolling steppe with a purple glow that

reminded one of the heather bloom on the moors of Scotland in August. Mounting gradually towards a gap in the group of limestone hills which here projects into the plain, and culminates in the bold peak of Beschtau, 7000 feet above the sea-level, we entered a low wood of beech and oak, the first we had seen since Voronej, 700 miles back, and, on emerging from it, to the south-west, saw Pjätigorsk at our feet, and the outer slopes of the Caucasus rising behind it. Alas! the southern sky was thick, and where the glittering snows of Elbruz and Dykhtau ought to have appeared, there were only clouds and darkness.

Pjätigorsk, which takes its name (Five Mountains) from the five summits of the picturesque mountain group just mentioned, has been resorted to for its sulphurous waters, which are drunk as well as bathed in, for nearly one hundred years. Its progress was slow so long as the Tcherkesses were accustomed to swoop down from the hills to the south-west and carry off the unlucky patients as prisoners. In those days Russian magnates came with a train of two or three hundred servants, and encamped by the springs for two months at a time. Afterwards a military post was established, to keep off the marauders, a bath-house was erected, and now, since the railway has come within three hours' drive, new streets are rising in all directions, and the number of visitors will no doubt increase rapidly. Far as the Caucasus is from St. Petersburg, the bathing-places of the Rhine or Bohemia are still farther, and as Southern Russia fills up, the population which forms the special *clientèle* of

Pjätigorsk grows larger and wealthier. One great advantage which it possesses is that, in addition to its own sulphurous waters, there are three other springs not far off, round each of which a bathing village has grown up, one of them chalybeate, a second alkaline, with iodides and bromides, and a third, the Narsan spring at Kislovodsk, strongly impregnated with carbonic acid as well as iron. This last discharges 190,000 cubic feet of gas in twenty-four hours, and is often resorted to as a sort of tonic by people who have gone through the regular course of sulphurous or alkaline waters. Like the famous spring of Bórszek, in Transylvania, which is used in the same way as an "after cure," it is quite cold (56° F.); and the physical pleasure of a plunge into its glittering waters, filled with carbonic acid gas rising and breaking in great bubbles, is one of the most intense that can be conceived. It is like bathing in iced champagne.

Watering-places in all countries are pretty much like one another; I suppose because they are all new, and all designed for the same class of persons. There is therefore not much that is distinctive about Pjätigorsk, except the contrast, so frequent in Russia, of civilization, even a rather pretentious civilization in the town, with a primitive rudeness all round it. It is as if Ems or Luchon were to be set down in the middle of a Western prairie, where everything is as nature made it. To the east and west there is the open steppe, all pasture land; to the north, a hill called Mashukha, rising boldly some 1600 feet above the town and 3500 feet above the sea; to the south, an upland, which

mounts slowly into great grassy downs that stretch backwards towards the main chain of the Caucasus, whose summits shew above it much as the giants of the Bernese Oberland do from the Jura between Basle and Olten. There can be few finer panoramic mountain views in the world than that from the top of Mashukha in clear weather, with this long line of icy pinnacles on one side, and the boundless steppe on the other. I climbed the hill before breakfast, in the hopes of enjoying this prospect, but jealous clouds still brooded over Elbruz and his brethren, and the only glimpse I got of him was long afterwards from the sea between Poti and Batum. One was well repaid, however, by the view over Pjätigorsk itself, and the two other villages which lie near to, though quite distinct from, it: one of them, the Scotch colony, planted here in the time of Alexander I. by missionaries sent to convert the Tcherkesses; the other a German colony, of somewhat later origin; all three laid out in straight lines, with trees running down their streets, and roads being made to connect them. They bore an almost ludicrous resemblance to those bird's-eye views of suburban estates or rising watering-places which one sees on the advertisement boards of our railway stations, and suggested how little variety there is in the world after all. Here at the foot of Mount Kaf one is reminded of Saltburn-by-the-Sea, or the Holland Park Estate. The advantage, on the whole, was on the side of Pjätigorsk, which is not only a pretty little place, but has that look of

what the Germans call *Freundlichkeit*, a cosy cheerfulness, which is not common in watering-places, and rare everywhere in Russia. What amuses one most is that, in so apparently peaceful a place, everybody goes about fully armed. Nearly all the male visitors are in uniform. After you leave Rostof, all the guards on the train, the porters at the stations, the waiters at the hotels, seem in a state of constant preparation to resist a Circassian foray. The very boy who brings up your boots in the morning comes with daggers rattling in his belt, and a string of cartridge holders sewed to the breast of his coat. So it is all through the Caucasian countries. In fact, arms are as necessary a part of a man's dress as a hat; you are remarked, and in the wilder places, despised, if you do not wear them. Inside the town there is not much to notice. There is an hotel with a handsome façade, a highly ornate coffee-room, and sleeping accommodation little better than that of a Russian steamer. There is a sort of boulevard in a hollow of the hill, where officers on sick leave, all in uniform, and a few ladies saunter up and down under the rows of trees between the bath-houses and the long wooden gallery where the waters are drunk. The drinking arrangements are agreeably simple. A glass tumbler is let down by a string into a deep well and pulled up with the water, whose taste, to be sulphurous, is not very disagreeable. Nobody has anything to do except play cards and smoke, the ladies joining freely in both amusements. The immediate neighbourhood is too bare to supply inviting

drives, and as for the Caucasus, a Russian would as soon think of starting to scale those rosy-tinted peaks as a Scarborough dandy of chartering a smack to cross to Holland. English travellers are a puzzle altogether to the Muscovite mind; but when it comes to alpine boots and ice-axes, they give the problem up.

We had intended to break into the Caucasus here, and make our way past Elbruz into Suanetia, where the grandest scenery in the chain is to be found, and thence to Kutais or Suram. But partly the difficulty of finding a courier or interpreter, partly the disturbances among the Suans, and, most of all, want of time, made it necessary to abandon this plan, and be content with travelling by railway to Vladikavkaz, and thence by the Dariel road to Tiflis, a journey which, though it is by no means so grand as the other, is still rich enough in beauty and interest to be worth coming for all the way from England. Accordingly we returned to the station at which we had left the railway to reach Pjätigorsk, and, catching the same train—there is but one in the day—reached Vladikavkaz after a journey of about six hours. The line runs along the open steppe, which is intersected by many low ridges, and occasionally by deep gullies, traversed by whitish torrents, the offspring of the glaciers which in this part of the chain descend from the great snow mountains. A remarkable feature of this steppe is the great number of tumuli which lie scattered over its surface, and which are supposed to be the burial

mounds of primitive races. They are commonly called Kurgans, and are found associated with rudely hewn wooden figures exceeding life size. Nothing is known of the purpose of these last, though probably they were idols, nor of their origin, except that it must lie in very remote times, since they are mentioned by ancient Greek writers as then existing in Scythia.

To the south the great chain rises with extraordinary abruptness, its snowy tops seeming to run straight down into the plain, so that one almost fancies it possible to reach one of these tops by following a single ridge right upwards without descending into any intervening valley. What with the gloomy weather and the gathering shades of night, we could distinguish nothing more than patches of white under the clouds, but the lower declivities seemed to be thickly wooded almost down to the level of the steppe. The line comes to an end at Vladikavkaz, more than a thousand miles from Moscow, and now a place of much consequence, not only as the chief fortress of this part of the country, commanding the entrance to the Dariel military road, but also as a trade centre from which the goods brought hither by the railway are forwarded by road to Tiflis or distributed through the surrounding country. Its name means Controller, or Key, of the Caucasus. It is a large, straggling sort of place, with the usual wide streets and low houses, improved, however, by the rows of trees that have been planted down some of them, and by the variety of uniforms and picturesque Caucasian dresses which

its mixed population displays. The inn is highly primitive ; but as we had arranged to start next day with the dawn, that was neither here nor there ; the mountain fever had seized us on finding ourselves at last under the shadow of this mysterious chain, and made us reckless of discomforts. At five next morning the sky was clear and bright, and, to our amazement, a snow-peak was looking in at the window, seeming to hang over the town. We were in the steppe, outside the mountains altogether, and here was an icy pinnacle, soaring into the air 14,000 feet above us, no farther off than Pilatus looks from Luzern. It was Kazbek, the mountain where Prometheus hung in chains. Hither the ocean nymphs came to console him ; over this desert to the north Io wandered, driven by the gadfly of Hera.

Up to this point we had managed to get on pretty well in hotels, railways, and steamers with German and French and a few words of Russian. Now, however, that it became necessary to take to the road, and enter upon those interminable wranglings with postmasters at post stations which every preceding traveller has described in such repulsive colours, the real difficulties of the way seemed to begin. We therefore thought ourselves fortunate in falling in with two Russian ladies bound for Tiflis, whose acquaintance we made in the train, and who, after a preliminary skirmish about English sympathy with Turkish cruelties, had proposed we should make up a party to hire a vehicle to carry us over the 126 miles of road to the southern capital. Afterwards they

picked up, rather to our disgust, a fifth partner, a Circassian gentleman, also making for Tiflis. We had of course conceived of a Tcherkess as a gigantic warrior, armed to the teeth with helmet and shield and the unerring rifle, hating the Russian intruder, and ready to die for Islam. This Circassian, however, turned out to be an advocate practising at Stavropol, and graduate of the university of Moscow — a short, swarthy man, who was, I believe, a Mohammedan, but never turned to Mecca all the time we were with him, and in other ways shewed small regard for the precepts of the Prophet. Our vehicle went by the name of an omnibus, but was what we should call a covered waggonette, with a leather roof and leather curtains made to draw round the sides, no useless protection against the dust and sun. It held four, or, at a pinch, six, inside, and one outside beside the driver and conductor, and seems to be the kind of carriage most used by travellers of the richer sort on this frequented piece of road. We made our bargain with the conductor for the whole way, but changed horses and driver at each post station. There are in all eleven stations on the road, at intervals of from eight to sixteen miles, better supplied with horses, and altogether better appointed, than probably anywhere else in Russia, as is natural when one considers the importance of the route, and the great number of military and civil officials who are constantly traversing it. These stations, however, are not necessarily or properly inns. At most of them it is a mere chance if you find anything to eat beyond

bread, and possibly eggs. The room or rooms in which the traveller halts while horses are being changed contains no furniture, except a table, two wooden chairs, and either an ancient sofa or two wooden frames—they cannot be called bedsteads—on which a luxurious traveller may lay his mattress and pillows, if he can spare the time for sleep, and does not mind being disturbed by the irruptions of other wayfarers at all hours during the night. In point of fact, few travellers do stop. The rule in Russia is to go straight ahead, by night as well as by day, eating at odd times, and dozing in your carriage when you can. One soon gets accustomed to that way of life, fresh air and excitement keeping any one who is in good health right enough so long as the journey lasts. The drawback is that you may happen to be uncontrollably drowsy just when you are passing through the finest bit of scenery.

Vladikavkaz lies sufficiently clear of the mountains to enjoy a noble view, looking westward along their northern slope, which is capped by several snowy summits; among them, and almost farthest to the west, the magnificent Dykhtau (16,925 feet). All this, however, is soon lost, for the road runs straight south into the hills, keeping the bottom of the valley, and in eight or nine miles enters a superb gorge among the limestone mountains which here, as in the Alps, form the outer heights of the chain. Clothed, wherever there is room for a root to hold, with the richest deciduous wood, they rise in wonderful precipices 5000 or 6000 feet above the valley, ledge

over ledge, and crag above crag, while at the bottom they press the river so close that at some points the road has been cut out in the overhanging cliff face, and the streamlets from above break in spray over it. The scenery is like that of parts of the Bavarian Alps, only on a far grander scale. After a time the glen widens a little, and its character changes, for we leave the limestone, and come between mountains of slate or schist. Here the slopes are scarcely less steep, but more uniform. They rise so abruptly that one hardly understands how wood can grow on them, and are seamed by deep torrent beds, dry at this season, but shewing by the piles of stone and gravel on each side of them with what tremendous force the winter waters must descend. Behind them bare, rocky tops occasionally stand out, rising far above the region of trees, and here and there, where a lateral glen comes down, and the declivity is less abrupt, Osset villages are seen, clusters of huts more like beehives than human dwellings, with small, rude square towers, perched on eminences for refuge against a sudden attack. The population of the valley is chiefly Osset; to the east, behind the savage ridges which guard it on that side, lies the country, first, of the mainly pagan Ingushes, and then of the Mohammedan Tchetchens, a powerful group of tribes quite distinct from the Ossets and Ingushes in blood and speech.

Hitherto the valley bottom has scarcely risen above the level of the steppe, and several of the characteristic steppe plants have held their ground, mixed with

the alpine flora of saxifrages, gentians, and so forth, which is beginning to appear.[1] But now, about sixteen miles from Vladikavkaz, the valley seems suddenly to come to an end, and the track to vanish among the tremendous crags out of which the river descends in a succession of cataracts. The road crosses to its eastern bank, and mounts rapidly along a shelf cut out of the mountain-side. At the bottom of the gorge there is the furious torrent; on each side walls of granite rising (vertically, one would think, though I suppose they cannot be quite vertical) 4000 feet above it; behind are still loftier ranges of sharp, red pinnacles, broken, jagged, and terrible, their topmost summits flecked with snow, not a bush, or flower, or blade of green to relieve their bare sternness. This is the famous Dariel Pass, a scene whose grandeur is all the more striking because one comes so suddenly upon it after the exquisite beauty of the wooded limestone mountains farther down; a scene worthy of the historical associations which invest it, alone of all Caucasian glens, with an atmosphere of ancient romance. Virgil is renowned for nothing more than the singular felicity of the epithets with which he conveys a picture or a story in a single word; and the phrase, "*duris cautibus horrens Caucasus*," seemed so exactly to describe this spot that I was tempted to fancy he had in his mind, when he used it, some account by a Greek traveller who had wandered thus far. The mighty masses that hem in this ravine do

[1] Among the commonest plants up the valley are our pretty little English ferns *Cistopteris fragilis* and *Asplenium septentrionale*.

literally bristle with sharp crags in a way that one does not see even in the *aiguille* ranges of Mont Blanc. The scene is more absolutely savage, if not more majestic, than any of the famous passes of the Alps or Norway. It is not merely the prodigious height and steepness of the mountains; it is their utter bareness and the fantastic wildness of their riven summits, towering 7000 or 8000 feet above the glen, that fill one with such a sense of terror and desolation. A stronger military post can hardly be imagined. Approaching it either way, the precipices seem to bar all further progress, and the eye seeks in vain to follow the road, which in one place passes by a tunnel behind a projecting mass of rock. For about a quarter of a mile the bottom of the gorge is filled by the foaming stream, so that it is only along the road that an army could advance. Half-a-dozen cannon could command the road, and a single explosion destroy it. At the upper end, where the ravine widens a little, and gives space for buildings, the Russians have erected a fort, and keep a small garrison. Behind, on a great rock mass, that rises some 300 feet in the middle of the glen, are the ruins of a far more ancient fortress, where, according to the Georgian legend, Queen Tamara dwelt, and caused all those of her suitors who did not please her (they were more numerous than Penelope's) to be flung into the torrent below. Some of the foundations looked so like Roman work that we wondered whether they might not be the remains of the fortress which tradition attributes

sometimes to Darius, son of Hystaspes, sometimes to Alexander the Great, which Pliny describes, and which was offered by a Hunnish prince to the Roman emperor Anastasius, and, when he hesitated, seized by the Persian king Kobad. His son Chosroes, the great enemy of Rome, held the pass to prevent the irruption of the nomads of the northern steppe, and, in the treaties he made with Justinian, stipulated that the latter should pay his share of the expenses incurred for a common benefit. Certain it is that this pass is the farthest point to which the dominion of Rome can ever have stretched on this side; and to think that we were re-entering here, after traversing such huge spaces of Scandinavia and Scythia, the former territories of the same empire which we had quitted at Hull, conveyed to us a lively idea of the vastness of that empire. It is hard, however, to believe that there can ever have been much danger of invasion through such a gorge as this; and I cannot but think that the Scythians who ravaged Upper Asia in the seventh century B.C., and the other nomad tribes which have from time to time penetrated from the north, must have come along the Caspian shore by Derbend. Nimble mountaineers might conceivably have effected a passage, when there was nothing but the rude track which can be just discerned here and there on the western bank of the Terek (the present road is on the east bank, high above the stream); but that a whole people should have brought through their waggons and their flocks seems well-nigh impossible. Be that as it

may, this is beyond question the site of the famous Caucasian or Iberian Gates.[1]

Above the gorge the valley widens a little, and its sides, though not less lofty, are somewhat less precipitous. To avoid the floods which have covered the bottom with gravel, the road mounts the western slope, along which prodigious masses of alluvium are heaped up, the remains, one would think, of some ancient moraine. Such traces of glacial action abound in the glen through its entire length. Towards Vladikavkaz they take the form of well-marked terraces; here they are less regular, but quite as huge, and where some side ravine comes in, its stream often cuts through a hard mass of rounded blocks and gravel for a depth of several hundred feet. The walls of the Dariel gorge itself are of grey, large-grained granite; but one sees many other igneous rocks in the cliffs—porphyries,

[1] See Strabo, xi. 3, 5; Tac. Ann. vi. 33; Pliny, Nat. Hist. vi. 5, 112 and xiv. (who gives the fullest description both of the Caucasian and Caspian Gates, which he distinguishes carefully, evidently intending the Dariel by his Caucasian Gates); and Procopius, Pers. i. 10, and Goth. iv. 3. I wish some university or other learned body would offer a prize for an essay on the Caucasian and Caspian Gates, for there is hardly a subject in ancient or mediæval geography more perplexing than the use of those names. There were three passes between which boundless confusion has arisen: first, the Dariel, sometimes called the Caucasian, sometimes the Caspian, sometimes the Iberian Gates; second, the pass between the mountains and the sea near Derbend, where is the wall of Gog and Magog, called sometimes the Caucasian, sometimes the Caspian, sometimes the Albanian Gates; third, a pass somewhere on the south coast of the Caspian, called the Caspian Gates, which was really visited and fortified by Alexander the Great, who never came near our Caucasus at all. Pliny (*loc. cit.*) talks of a gate and fortress: "Fores obditae ferratis trabibus subter medias amne diri odoris fluente, citraque in rupe castello quod vocatur Cumania, communito ad arcendas transitu gentes innumeras, ibi loci terrarum orbe portis discluso."

syenites, and basalts; about four miles above the fort a beautiful range of basaltic columns, much like those of the Giant's Causeway, runs along the steep mountain-side for some distance. After this the metamorphic schists reappear, and prevail, with occasional patches of interjected igneous rocks, until, far down in the southern spurs of the chain, one comes again upon the limestones which have been thrown off upon both flanks of the central crystalline mass.

Some ten miles above the Dariel, and about twenty-seven from Vladikavkaz, the road, descending to the river, suddenly rounds a corner of rock, and with a start the traveller finds himself full in face of the magnificent Kazbek, a steep dome of snow breaking down on the east in a grand black precipice. The top is 16,533 feet above the sea, and 11,000 feet above the little alpine plain or circular hollow in the mountains where stands the *aoul* (village) of Kazbek, inhabited by Georgians. The post-house here is one of the best on the road, and actually furnishes two or three beds—European beds with sheets and a dirty blanket; so, wishing to have a little time to take in the wonderful scenery, we proposed to make a halt for the night. This, however, our companions, who were anxious to reach Tiflis, would by no means agree to; and all we could obtain by way of concession was an hour and a half to climb to a little church which stands perched on a height 1400 feet above the glen, and commands a noble view of Kazbek with his attendant peaks. The building interested us as the

first specimen we had seen of Georgian or Armenian architecture; it was, indeed still is, a much visited place of pilgrimage, and seemed to date from the twelfth or thirteenth century. When we reached it, the clouds which each morning gather round the great summits as soon as the day grows hot, about nine or ten o'clock, still kept the top of Kazbek hid; but after waiting ten minutes, we were rewarded, about 4.30 P.M., by seeing them disperse under the strong breeze, and his glorious snowy crest came out against the intense blue of a sky whose clearness seemed to surpass even that of the Alps. North of it a savage glen shewed where lay the great glacier of Devdorak, by which the summit is ascended; on the other side, a line of untrodden snows runs south-west into the heart of the chain; in the middle stood up the perfectly isolated dome, all snow-covered, except where on the eastern face stands out the great black precipice to which Prometheus was chained.[1] Kazbek is a mass of trachyte, probably an ancient volcano, with its two snow sides looking so steep that we did not wonder that all travellers had pronounced them inaccessible till they yielded to the courage and skill of our countrymen, Messrs. Freshfield, Moore, and Tucker, in 1868. The climbers incurred some danger, especially in the latter part of the ascent; but the easier route they discovered in descending has been taken

[1] According to the generally accepted legend, which probably took its origin from some Greek traveller passing this way. But Aeschylus does not conceive of Prometheus as chained in the Caucasus. In his drama the rock hangs over the sea and the plain of Scythia, and the Caucasus is spoken of as being at some considerable distance away.

once or twice since; and by it the ascent is not really difficult, and involves, if the climber has proper appliances, no serious risk. We longed to try our fortune, but having nothing in the shape of a guide, nor any chance of procuring one, and no other mountaineering apparatus, there was little use thinking further of it.

Below us, on the opposite side from Kazbek, lay the little green plain with its patches of rye and oats, its fields divided by low stone walls and tiny, flat-roofed cottages; beyond it, again, the eastern wall of the valley rose with terrific steepness to a height of 11,000 or 12,000 feet, with slopes too abrupt to bear snow, which only lay in sheltered northward hollows. The elements of the view were the same as we had seen many a time before, but somehow the view had a character of its own quite unlike anything European. Whether it was that one missed the cheerful pastures dotted over with herds and *châlets*, or that there was no wood below, and comparatively little snow above, or simply that the mountain lines were more ruthlessly stern and jagged, it was hard to tell; but, anyhow, the impression was quite new. The Caucasus, though its latitude is but little farther south than that of the Alps, is not a mere repetition of the Alps on a larger scale, any more than the Russian steppe is a repetition of the Hungarian plain; its character, the impression which its scenery makes, is wholly different.

We returned to the post-house punctually at the appointed hour, but were met by reproachful faces.

"There are now no horses to be had; in your absence other travellers came up, and, being ready to start, called for all that were in the stable; we could not retain them. There will be none fit for work now before to-morrow morning." Although secretly rejoiced to have a few more hours under the shadow of Kazbek, still, as politeness required, we dissembled our satisfaction, were forgiven, and prepared to spend the night at the uninviting post-house. There still wanted an hour to sunset; so we rambled up to an Osset *aoul*, which stands on the western bank of the Terek, and examined the quaint little corn-mills that have been planted along the courses of the descending brooks, rude buildings of loose stone about four feet high, with a horizontal wheel inside a foot and a half in diameter, and two bits of millstones scarcely larger than those of the old Irish quern or hand-mill. Civilization in the Caucasian countries has not got so far as a windmill: at any rate, we never saw one. On the flat, earthen roofs of the houses the people were treading or thrashing out their rye; the interiors were dark, windowless, and apparently without furniture; the walls of unmortared stone. Pretty, fair-haired children followed us about, offering crystals for sale, or begging in an unknown tongue.

The Georgian village on the opposite side of the river, where the post-house stands, is more civilized; its houses are arranged in something like lanes; it has a church which from the style I took to be ancient, but found to date from the beginning of this century only, a curious instance of that steadfast adhesion to

old architectural models which is the rule in Georgia and Russia, and makes it difficult to tell the age of a building from its style, as one can generally do in Western Europe; though, to be sure, our descendants may not find it so simple a matter to fix the churches of the nineteenth century, which imitate every earlier fashion. In this village several of the houses had singular square towers, erected, no doubt, for purposes of defence in the unquiet times, before the coming of the Russians, when some neighbouring tribe might swoop down at any moment on the peasant. Such towers are common among most of the Caucasian peoples; the finest, one hears, are to be found among the independent Suans in the Ingur valley. While we were wandering round the church, we asked some question about it of a gentleman leaning over the second floor verandah of an adjoining house, the biggest in the village, and were desired, in French, to come up the ladder. Complying, we were welcomed by a young man with those soft handsome features which are so common among the Georgians, who turned out to be the Prince of Kazbek, a Georgian noble, who owns this part of the valley. He was entertaining two or three government *employés* sent from Tiflis to examine the glacier of Devdorak, which has several times formed a *debâcle*, behind which water accumulated in a lake, which, breaking out at last, devastated the Terek valley. Among them was a young engineer from the Baltic provinces, speaking German, and an accomplished Armenian official, speaking both German and French, with whom we talked about the Caucasus to

our heart's content, over endless glasses of lemon tea, while the great mountain glittered before us in the clear cold starlight. It was late when we parted from our genial host at the door of the post-house; and before light next morning we had mounted the omnibus again, and were pursuing our drowsy way up the valley. It is comparatively open up here, perfectly bare of wood, and uninhabited, except for an occasional village surrounding two or three grim old square towers. The scenery is more savage than beautiful; but if we had not seen the Dariel defile lower down, we should have thought it magnificent, for Kazbek occasionally shewed his snows, blushing rosy under the first sunlight, to the west, while the great eastern range rose more imposing than ever as we approached the axis of the chain. The last station on the north side of the watershed is Kobi, where we breakfasted (as usual off the alone attainable eggs and tea), and where is a curious Osset altar, adorned all round with the horns of the great wild goat, *Capra caucasica*, at which sacrifices, half Christian, half pagan, are offered. Here the Terek comes down from a wild glen running deep into pathless mountains to the west, and the road turns up the short valley of a lesser stream, remarkable from the great number of mineral springs that gush out from its sides. One which we drank of sparkles with bubbles of carbonic acid gas, and had a pleasant sweetish taste; but all, as we were afterwards told, contain, along with their iron and other valuable ingredients, too much chalk to make them serviceable for medicinal pur-

poses. The summit level of the road, about twenty miles from Kazbek station and forty-one from Vladikâvkaz, is 8015 feet above the sea, a green, slightly undulating level, from which no distant view can be obtained, except straight south, for on both sides it is enclosed by mountains rising about 1400 feet above it, while other summits farther back reach 11,000 or 12,000 feet. The Russians call this *col* or pass Krestovaya Gora, or Cross Mountain, from a cross planted on it. The name, "Pass of Dariel," belongs properly only to the gorge below Kazbek station, where the fort stands; but as this gorge is the most remarkable feature of the whole route, and the most important military position, geographers and foreigners generally extend its name to the whole road from Vladikavkaz to Tiflis. There is no fortification at the top, or anywhere, save at the Dariel gorge; nor did I see any military posts along the road. During the war with Shamyl, however, it was strongly guarded, and was indeed of the utmost importance to Russia; since by holding it they not only kept open their communications with Georgia, but prevented a junction between the hero of Daghestan and the tribes that were in arms to the west. Needless to say that it is also of the greatest consequence to her in the present struggle, since across it all her troops and munitions of war are sent to Armenia.

From the open green pastures of the watershed the road descends an almost precipitous mountain face in a series of long zigzags, cut with admirable skill, and at their foot reaches the pretty little Georgian village

of Mleti. Nothing can be more beautiful than the view in descending. To the north-east you look up into a wilderness of stern red mountains, their hollows filled with snow or ice, their sides strewed with huge loose blocks. Round Mleti itself woods begin to hang upon the hills, and fields of rye diversify the pastures, while down the long vista that opens to the south dense forests enclose the narrow ravine through which the river Aragva finds its way to the low country. The pastoral beauty of the scene is all the more felt because you have come straight from a land of desolation; there is a sense of southern luxuriance about the landscape like that which greets the traveller who drops into Italy from the Alps of Switzerland. Down from Mleti the road follows the Aragva (the Aragon of Strabo) through its deep, richly wooded valley, adorned here and there with ruined towers, perched upon projecting points, as far as the little town of Ananaur, where the Caucasus proper may be said to subside into the hilly rather than mountainous country of Georgia. These woods are really splendid, composed almost entirely of deciduous trees, beech, oak, hazel, birch, and such like, and so close as to look perfectly impenetrable. The scenery is something like that of Killiecrankie, in Perthshire, only on a far vaster scale; but the river is scanty and whitish from its parent glaciers, every way inferior to the Scottish stream. Ananaur has a grand old castle, commanding the road and valley, within whose walls stand two ancient churches, elaborately adorned outside in the Georgian style with the figures of lions and other creatures

elegantly carved in relief, and surrounded with arabesques. From here the road, which first mounts over a ridge of hills, and then descends past the quaint little town of Dushet towards the Kur, is pretty enough, but less interesting, and I relieved its tedium by a long talk with the ladies, who, it appeared, had done us the honour to take us for poets, because we seemed to admire the scenery, and I had been gathering plants. As we are both lawyers, and considered by our friends to be rather plain matter-of-fact people, this unexpected compliment flattered us not a little, and on the strength of it I indited a sonnet to the younger lady's cigarette, which was however, like its subject, of so evanescent a nature that it need not be reproduced here. Asking them about the writers of modern Russia, we found what had already surprised us, that Turgenef does not hold among his own country folk so transcendently conspicuous a place as Western readers would allot him. They appear to put others, whose works have not been translated into French or German, or, when translated, have made little impression, on a level with him. Perhaps this is because he has been so keen a critic of Russian weaknesses: if so, it is another instance of that sensitiveness one so often remarks among them.

About 11 P.M. our omnibus drew up in the famous city of Mtzkhet, once the capital of the Georgian kingdom, and seat of their patriarch, and now a wretched village of some hundred and fifty people, dwelling in the shadow of two noble old churches and a large ruined castle. The position is a fine one, for it occupies the

middle of and commands the narrow valley by which the Kur descends from its upper basin into the lower basin of Tiflis, and is defended on one side by the Kur itself, on the other by the Aragva, which here mingle their waters. From very early times the site has been inhabited, witness the numerous cave dwellings hewn out in the soft limestone rock of the cliffs along the Kur; and it was not far off that Pompey, in his famous march to the Caucasus, defeated the Iberian armies. Two centuries after the introduction of Christianity, a Georgian king forsook it for Tiflis, and now its chief importance lies in being the point where the military road to Vladikavkaz strikes the railway from Tiflis to the Black Sea. Anxious to examine it, and still more anxious to lie down and sleep, on the ground, in a post-house, anywhere, we heard with pleasure the conventional postmaster declare that no horses could be had before nine o'clock next morning; it was impossible, not a hoof in his stable, nor in any of the peasants' either. However, our companions, and especially the Circassian, who, I fancy, had a law-suit in Tiflis, were unwearied and inexorable. In vain we dwelt on the antiquarian interest of Mtzkhet, and proposed to give them a sketch of its early history, beginning from its founder, the great-grandson of Japhet; in vain on the advantage of entering Tiflis by daylight, and the unlikelihood of getting a bed there in the small hours. In vain we even condescended to put in a word for the postmaster, insisting on the duty of travellers not to press too hardly on these poor men and their hard-worked horses. "Let

us get at once to the journey's end," they replied; "we have been travelling only forty hours. Surely that has not tired you" (dear energetic ladies). "As for Mtzkhet and its churches, the world is a big world, and you cannot see everything in it." At last, relying on the obstinacy of the postmaster, we agreed to go on if horses could be found; whereupon the Circassian barrister bullied him with so much vigour that horses were found forthwith, and in two hours more we were rattling over the stones of the capital of Transcaucasia, and on our first night in Asia were received by the drowsy but friendly servants of the Hôtel de l'Europe.

CHAPTER III.

TRANSCAUCASIA.

IN this chapter I shall attempt to give a sort of general sketch of the Russian territories lying to the south of the Caucasus, the richest, and, for the present at least, geographically the most important of all the Asiatic dominions of the Czar. It is, like the rest of this book, a record of first impressions only, but of impressions formed, as I venture to believe, without any pre-existing bias, and to a considerable extent tested by comparison with the conclusions which other travellers have reached. And even for first impressions there is this much to be said, that the risk of errors of observation and of hasty generalization has some compensation in the freshness with which things present themselves to a new-comer. Occasionally he is struck by aspects of society or politics which are really true and important, but which one who has lived long in a country finds so familiar that they have ceased to stimulate his curiosity, and would perhaps be omitted from his descriptions. This may supply some justification for the apparent presumption of a traveller who admits that he had to see, and now has to write, more hastily than he could have wished. What I

have got to say of particular parts of the country, such as Tiflis, the capital, and Armenia, is reserved for later chapters.

Transcaucasia is a convenient general name for the countries lying between the Black Sea, the Caspian, and the Caucasus, which make up the dominions of the Czar in Western Asia. It is not, however, an official Russian name, for although for some purposes they distinguish Ciscaucasia and Transcaucasia, the administrative district or lieutenancy of the empire which they call the Caucasus (Kavkaz) includes not only the regions south of the mountains, but also several governments lying to the north, in what the geographers call Europe. Nor does it denote any similarity or common character in these countries, the chief of which are Georgia, which lies along the upper course of the Kur, south of the Caucasus; Armenia, farther south, on the Araxes, between Georgia, Persia, and Turkey; Imeritia, west of Georgia; and Mingrelia, west of Imeritia, along the eastern coast of the Black Sea. However, it is a convenient name, and before speaking of each of these countries by itself, something may be said of the general physical features of Transcaucasia as a whole. It may be broadly described as consisting of two mountain regions and two plains. First, all along the north, there are the slopes of the Caucasus, which on this side (at least in its western half, for towards the east the main chain sinks quite abruptly into the levels of Kakhitia) sends off several lateral ranges descending far from the axis, and at last subsiding into a

fertile and well-peopled hilly country. Secondly, on the south, over against the Caucasus, there is another mountain land, less elevated, but wider in extent, consisting of the chain which under various local names (some geographers have called it the Anti-Caucasus) runs from Lazistan at the south-east angle of the Black Sea away to the east and south-east till it meets the ranges of Persia. Towards the south, this chain ramifies all over Armenia, and here attains its greatest height in the volcanic summits of Ala Göz, 13,460 feet above the sea, while northward its spurs form a hilly country stretching to Tiflis. These two mountain masses are connected by a ridge which, branching off from the Caucasus between Elbruz and Kazbek, the two best known of all the summits of that chain, divides the waters of the Kur from those of the Rion (Phasis), and is crossed by the great road and railway from Tiflis to the Black Sea near the town of Suram. Although of no great height —it is only about 3600 feet at Suram—this ridge has a most important influence (to be referred to presently) both on the climate and on the ethnology of the country. It is that which Strabo speaks of as inhabited by the Moschici,[1] and is sometimes, therefore, called by modern geographers the Meschic ridge.

The two plains I have spoken of are of very unequal size. The eastern extends all along the Caspian, from the southern foot of the Caucasus to the

[1] Interpreters, from the time of Josephus downwards (who places them more towards Cappadocia), have sought to identify these Moschici or Meschi (as Procopius calls them, Goth. iv. 3) with the Mesech of the Bible (Gen. x. 2; Ps. cxx. 5).

Persian frontier, and runs up the valley of the Kur, gradually rising, to within a few miles of Tiflis. It is open, bare, and dry; is, in fact, what the Russians call steppe country, or the Americans prairie, through nearly its whole extent, and though the soil is fertile, much of it, especially towards the Caspian, is but thinly peopled or cultivated. The western plain, on the other hand, lying along the lower course of the Rion, between the Caucasus, the Anti-Caucasus, and the Black Sea, is moist and densely wooded, parts of it little better than a forest swamp, but the whole, where dry enough for tillage, extremely rich. It has all the appearance of having been, at no distant period, a bay of the Euxine, which may gradually have got filled up by the alluvium brought down by the Rion and other Caucasian streams. When this bay existed, and when the Caspian, which we know to have greatly shrunk, even in comparatively recent times, extended far up the valley of the Kur, and was joined to the Euxine north of the Caucasus, between the mouths of the Kuban and Terek, the Caucasus itself formed an immense mountain peninsula, joined to the highlands of Western Asia by an isthmus consisting of the Suram ridge already referred to and the elevated country east of it. And as at this time the Caspian was also, no doubt, connected with the Sea of Aral (which is only some 160 feet above the present level of the Caspian, and about 80 above the ocean), one may say that the Mediterranean then extended through this chain of inland seas, far into Central Asia, perhaps to the sites

of those cities, Khiva, Tashkend, Bokhara, of which we have lately heard so much.

The climates of these two plains are strangely contrasted, and the ridge of Suram marks the boundary between them. On the Black Sea coast the winters are mild (mean winter temperature about 44° F., mean annual temperature 58°), snow falls, perhaps, but hardly lies, all sorts of southern plants thrive in the open air, and the rainfall is so abundant that vegetation is everywhere, even up in the mountains, marvellously profuse. At Poti, the seaport at the mouth of the Rion which every traveller from the West is condemned to pass through, the most fever-smitten den in all Asia, one feels in a perpetual vapour bath, and soon becomes too enervated to take the most obvious precautions against the prevailing malady. Higher up, in the deep valleys of the Ingur and Kodor, rivers which descend from the great chain, the forests are positively tropical (though the vegetation itself is European) in the splendour of the trees and the rank luxuriance of the underwood. If there were a few roads and any enterprise, this country might drive a magnificent trade in wood and all sorts of natural productions.

This is the general character of the Black Sea coast. But when you cross the Meschic watershed at Suram, and enter the basin of the Kur, drawing towards the Caspian, everything changes. The streams are few, the grass is withered on the hillside, by degrees even the beechwoods begin to disappear; and as one gets farther and farther to the east, beyond Tiflis, there is

in autumn hardly a trace of vegetation either on plain or hills, except along the courses of the shrunken rivers and on the northern slopes of the mountains that divide the basins of the Kur and Aras. In these regions the winter is very severe, and the summer heats are tremendous. At Lenkoran, on the Caspian, in latitude 38° N., the sea is often blocked with ice for two miles from the shore, and the average winter temperature is the same as that of Maestricht, in latitude 51°, or Reykjavik (in Iceland), in latitude 64°. The rainfall, which near Poti reaches 63 inches in the year, is at Baku only 13·7, and in some parts of the Aras valley only 5 inches. The explanation, of course, is that, while the moist westerly winds are arrested by the ridge at Suram, the eastern steppe lies open to the parching and bitter blasts which descend from Siberia and the frozen plains of Turkestan, while the scorching summers are not moderated by the influence of a neighbouring sea, the Caspian being too small to make any great difference in the climate.

In Armenia the same causes operate, with the addition that, as a good deal of the country stands at a great height above the sea-level, the winters are in those parts long and terrible. At Alexandropol, for instance, the great Russian fortress over against Kars, where a large part of her army is always stationed, snow lies till the middle of April, spring lasts only about a fortnight, and during summer the country is parched like any desert.[1]

[1] The mean winter temperature of Alexandropol is 16° F.; its annual rainfall 14·68 inches.

A result of this remarkable dryness of the climate, away from the Black Sea and its influences, is that the landscapes of Eastern Transcaucasia are bare, brown, and generally dreary. If there was ever wood on the lower grounds, it has been long since cut away, and probably could hardly be made to grow if now replanted. There is a certain impressiveness in the wide views of bare brown open plains and stern red mountains which are so often before one in these countries, and, I fancy, in Persia also; the effects both of light and shade, and of colour, are broad, deep, solemn. These are the merits of Eastern landscape generally, which an eye accustomed to the minuter prettiness of such a country as our own perhaps underrates. Admitting them, however, I must still remark that there is not much in Transcaucasia to attract the lover of natural beauty, except in two regions, the spurs of the Caucasus and the part of Armenia which lies round and commands a prospect of Mount Ararat. These are certainly considerable exceptions, for the scenery of each is quite unlike anything to be found in Europe. The luxuriant vegetation of the deep western valleys of the chain and the noble views of its tremendous snowy summits, streaming with glaciers, present pictures surpassing even those of the Italian valleys of the Alps —pictures that one must go to the Himalaya to find a parallel for. Ararat, again, an isolated volcanic cone rising 17,000 feet above the sea and 14,400 feet above the plain at its own base, is a phenomenon the like of which hardly exists in the world.

Whether beautiful or the reverse, however, the country is nearly everywhere rich, and might do wonders if it were filled by a larger, more energetic, and better educated population. There are only three millions of people in it now; it could easily support twenty. The steppe soil is generally extremely fertile, needing nothing but irrigation to produce heavy crops of grain. In some parts, especially along the Araxes, cotton is raised. The warm valleys of Mingrelia and Imeritia produce maize, rice, and other southern cereals; corn grows up to a height of 5000 or 7000 feet, and the tea shrub thrives on the hills. The olive is not common, and, though the vine will grow almost everywhere, the wine is generally inferior. Some of that which is made in Armenia is tolerable, but by far the best is that of Kakhitia, a delightfully pretty region lying immediately under the great wall of the Eastern Caucasus, north-east of Tiflis. Its wine is sound and wholesome, albeit a little acid. The natives are very proud of it, and incessantly vaunt its merits as a specific against fever and otherwise; they certainly all follow the prescription, and the Georgians in particular, a race of jovial topers, are apt to carry their appreciation a little too far. If it would bear travelling, it would be a valuable article of export; and possibly, when better methods of making it than the present very primitive ones are introduced, and when it is put in casks instead of buffalo hides smeared with naphtha, it may rival the wines of the Don and the Crimea in the markets of Southern Russia. Of

the wealth of the western forests in box, walnut, and woods of all sorts, suited for furniture as well as shipbuilding, it is needless to speak ; of the minerals, it is rather difficult, for although everyone believes that there is abundance in the mountains, and there is constant talk of getting up companies to work them, very little has been done to determine their precise amount or quality. Coal certainly exists in the west, among the mountains of Imeritia, north-east of Kutais, but the abundance of wood has made people remiss in availing themselves of it. Iron and copper have been discovered in many places ; the best copper mines hitherto opened lie in the northern declivity of the Karabagh Mountains, to the south-west of Elizavetpol, and are worked by Messrs. Siemens Brothers. Salt is abundant in Armenia, especially near Kulpi, on the Upper Aras ; and the Mingrelians, who really have silver mines, appeal to the instance of the Golden Fleece as proof that the precious metals exist among them. There is no doubt that grains of gold are found in the detritus brought down by the Phasis and other streams, but whether it is true, as geographers and travellers have gone on repeating ever since Strabo set the story going, that the natives place fleeces in the current to catch the passing particles, I have not been able to ascertain. Sulphur has been got in Daghestan, and was used by Shamyl to make gunpowder when he could get none from Persia. Perhaps the most remarkable mineral product is naphtha, which bursts forth in many places, but most profusely near Baku, on the coast of the Caspian, in

strong springs, some of which are said to be always burning, while others, lying close to or even below the sea, will sometimes, in calm weather, discharge the spirit over the water, so that, when a light is applied, the sea takes fire, and blue flames flicker for miles over the surface. The place was greatly revered of old by the fire-worshippers, and after they were extirpated from Persia by the Mohammedans, who hate them bitterly, some few occasionally slunk here on pilgrimage. Now, under the more tolerant sway of the Czar, a solitary priest of fire is maintained by the Parsee community of Bombay, who inhabits a small temple built over one of the springs, and, like a vestal, tends the sacred flame by day and night.

If it is hard to give a general idea of a country so various in its physical aspects, it is even more so to describe its strangely mixed population. From the beginning of history, all sorts of tribes and races have lived in this isthmus between the Euxine and the Caspian, and though some of them may have now disappeared or been absorbed by others, new elements have pressed in from the north and east. Strabo, writing under Augustus, mentions four peoples as dwelling south of the Caucasus: the Colchians, along the Black Sea; the Iberians, farther to the east, beyond the cross ridge of Suram (which he calls an *ἄγκων* of the Caucasus); the Albanians, still farther eastward, in the plains along the Caspian Sea; and the Armenians, to the south of all these, in the country we still call Armenia. To the north of the three former, the wooded valleys of the Caucasus were occupied by

many wild tribes, more akin, says he, to the Sarmatians, but speaking many different languages; one of the wildest are the Soanes, the name still borne by an extremely disagreeable race, who inhabit the grandest part of the whole Caucasus, immediately to the south of Elbruz and Koschtantau, and of whom I have spoken in the preceding chapter. While these Soanes have been protected by their inaccessibility in the pathless recesses of the mountains, all trace of Colchians, Iberians, and Albanians,[1] has long since passed away, and though Mingrelians now live where Jason found the Colchians, there is nothing to show that any of the blood of Aeëtes and Medea flows in their degenerate veins. Russian ethnologists talk of a Karthalinian stock, to which Mingrelians, Imeritians, and Georgians, as well as some of the mountain tribes, are declared to belong. But, without discussing problems of ethnology for whose solution sufficient materials have not yet been collected, I will shortly describe the chief races that now occupy the country.

Beginning from the west, we find the Mingrelians along the Black Sea coast, from the Turkish border to Sukhum Kaleh. They are the ne'er-do-wells of the Caucasian family. All their neighbours, however contemptible a Western may think them, have a bad word and a kick for the still more contemptible Mingrelian. To believe them, he is lazy, sensual, treacherous, and stupid, a liar and a thief. The strain

[1] Those who build ethnological theories on similarities of name may be asked whether they can establish any relationship between these Albanians and the Albanians of Epirus and the Scottish Alban, or between these Iberians and the Iberians of Spain.

in which the Russians and Armenians talk of them reminded me of the description one gets from the Transylvanian Saxons and Magyars of the Roumans who live among them. You ask what kind of people the Wallachs are. "A dirty people," they answer, "a treacherous people, a lazy people, a superstitious people, a cruel people, a gluttonous people. Otherwise not such a bad kind of people." ("*Sonst ist es kein schlechtes Volk.*") Lazy the Mingrelian certainly is, but in other respects I doubt if he is worse than his neighbours; and he lives in so damp and warm a climate that violent exercise must be disagreeable. He is a well-made, good-looking fellow, but with a dull and heavy expression which is sensual so far as it goes. And he is certainly backward in agriculture and trade, making very little of a singularly rich country. South of Mingrelia lies Guria, on the slopes and ridges of the Anti-Caucasus, a land where the people are more vigorous and upright, and where, as they have been less affected by conquest and immigration, the picturesque old costumes have best maintained themselves. West of the Mingrelians, in the hilly regions of the Upper Rion and its tributaries, live the Imeritians, a race speaking a dialect of Georgian, who may generally be distinguished by their bushy hair. My personal knowledge of them is confined to three waiters at three several inns, rather a narrow basis for induction, but quite as wide as many travellers have had for some very sweeping conclusions. They have a better name than the Mingrelians,

both for industry and honesty, and these three waiters were pleasant, civil fellows, though not particularly bright.

Still farther east, and occupying the centre of Transcaucasia, are the Georgians, called by the Russians Grusinians or Grusians, who may be con-considered the principal and, till the arrival of the Muscovite, the dominant race of the country. They call themselves Karthli, deducing their origin from a patriarch Karthlos (who was brother of Haik, the patriarch of the Armenian nation, and of Legis, the ancestor of the Lesghians), a grandson, or, as others hold, great-grandson of Gomer, son of Japhet. According to their own legends, they worshipped the sun and the moon and the five planets, and swore by the grave of Karthlos until converted to Christianity by St. Nina, in the fourth century of our era. For several centuries their kingdom extended almost to the Black Sea in one direction and the Caspian in another, and maintained itself with some credit against the hostility of Turks and Persians, though often wasted by Persian armies, and for long periods obliged to admit the suzerainty of the Shah. Its heroic age was the time of Queen Tamara, who flourished in the twelfth century, and is still honoured by pictures all over the country, in which she appears as a beautiful Amazon, not unlike the fancy portraits of Joan of Arc. To her is ascribed the foundation of every ancient church or monastery, just as all the strongholds are said to have been built by the robber

Kir Oghlu,[1] and as in Scotland there is hardly an old mansion but shows Wallace's sword and Queen Mary's apartment. Somewhat later the kingdom became divided into three, Kakhitia, Karthli or Georgia proper, on the Upper Kur, and Imeritia; and in the period of weakness that followed it began to look for help to Russia. As early as 1492, a king of Kakhitia invoked the Czar Ivan III., and in 1638 the king of Imeritia swore fealty to Alexis Mihailovitch. The famous treaty of Kainardji in 1774 (about which we have had so many lively discussions) placed Georgia, Imeritia, and Mingrelia, under the protection of Russia.[2] However, the *coup de grâce* was given by the invasion of the Persians, under Aga Mohammed Khan, in 1795, which reduced Georgia to such wretchedness that the reigning king George made over his dominions to Alexander I. in 1799, and the country was finally occupied by Russian troops in 1802.[3] One sees traces of a sort of feudal period in the numerous castles; most of them mere square towers, such as we see on the coast of Scotland and the north of Ireland, which

[1] Stories of Kir (or Kara = Black) Oghlu are told all about the country. One, localised in Armenia, represents him as meeting a party of travellers, and among them one with pistols (then lately invented) stuck in his belt. He asks what those things are, and, when their use is explained to him, exclaims, "Farewell, Kir Oghlu, your occupation is gone," rides off into the mountains, and is never more seen.

[2] See this treaty in the appendix to Mr. Hollands' 'Lecture on the Treaty Relations of Russia and Turkey.'

[3] Russia, however, did not acquire Imeritia till 1810, the Mingrelian coast till 1829 (by the treaty of Adrianople), the Caspian coast south of the mouth of the Kur till 1813, and the valley of the Middle Araxes till 1828. She had already obtained from Persia in 1797 Daghestan and Shirvan as far as the Kur mouth.

lie scattered all over Georgia and Imeritia; and the organization of society was feudal till quite lately, the peasantry serfs, the upper class landowning nobles and their dependants. It is a joke among the Russians that every Georgian is a noble; and as the only title of nobility is Prince, the effect to an English ear of hearing all sorts of obscure people, country postmasters, droshky drivers, sometimes even servants, described as being Prince So-and-so, is at first grotesque. This at least may be said for the numerous nobility, that, although it is both vain and frivolous, it does not despise all honest occupations.

Everyone has heard of the Georgian beauties, who in the estimation of Turkish importers rivalled or surpassed those of Circassia itself. Among them a great many handsome and even some beautiful faces may certainly be seen, regular and finely chiselled features, a clear complexion, large and liquid eyes, an erect carriage, in which there is a good deal of dignity as well as of voluptuousness. To a taste, however, formed upon Western models, mere beauty of features and figure, without expression, is not very interesting; and these faces have seldom any expression. They want even that vivacity which, in the parallel case of the women of Andalusia, partly redeems the absence of intelligence. Admirable as pieces of Nature's handiwork, they are not charming. A Turk may think them perfection, but it may be doubted whether anyone who had seen the ladies of Cork or Baltimore would take much pleasure in their society. However, this is a point on which people will disagree to the

end of time; and those who hold that it is enough to look at a beauty without feeling inclined to talk to her need not go beyond Georgia to find all they can wish. It must be remembered, however, that this loveliness is rather fleeting. Towards middle life the complexion is apt to become sallow, and the nose and chin rather too prominent, while the vacuity of look remains. One is told that they are, as indeed the whole nation is, almost uneducated, with nothing but the pettiest personal interests to fill their thoughts or animate their lives.

The men are sufficiently good-looking and pleasing in manner, with, perhaps, a shade of effeminacy in their countenances, at least in those of the lowland. They do not strike one as a strong race, either physically or otherwise, with any future before it, nor have they ever produced a great man, or done anything considerable in history, although they have had civilization and Christianity, after a sort, ever since the third century of our era, and have maintained their religion and national existence with great tenacity against both Turks and Persians. So early as the sixth century, Procopius compliments the Iberians (who are doubtless the ancestors of our Georgians) on their resolute adherence to Christian rites in spite of the attacks of the Persian fire-worshippers,[1] who, it may be remarked in passing, seem to have been the first to

[1] Kobad, the reigning king of Persia, whose supremacy the Iberians then owned, had tried to force them over to his faith, and began by ordering them to desist from burying their dead, and to adopt the Persian practice of exposing the dead body to the birds and beasts. They refused, and sought help from the Romans (Procop. Pers. i. 12).

set the example of religious persecution. The Muslims say that the Christianity of the Georgians is owing to their fondness for wine and for pork, both which good things, as everybody knows, the Prophet has forbidden to true believers. They belong, of course, to the Orthodox Eastern Church, and are now in full communion with the Church of Russia, of which indeed they may be said to have become a branch, though their liturgy differs a little in some points. During the earlier middle ages I suspect that they were more influenced by heterodox Armenia than by Constantinople, though they separated from the Armenian Church in the end of the sixth century, when the latter finally anathematized the Council of Chalcedon. Their ecclesiastical alphabet, for they have two, is taken from the Armenian. Of their number it is difficult to form an estimate; it can hardly exceed 500,000 souls, and may be considerably less.[1]

Scattered through Upper Georgia, and to be found among the peasantry as well as in the towns, there is a considerable Armenian population, who probably settled here when their national kingdom was destroyed by the Seljukian conquerors, Alp Arslan and Malek Shah, in the eleventh century. Farther south, in Armenia proper, they constitute the bulk of the population in the country districts, Kurds being mixed with them in the mountains, Tatars in the plains, and Persians in the towns. As I shall have something to say of them in a later chapter, it is unnecessary to

[1] The total number of the Grusinian race, including Imeritians and Mingrelians, is estimated by a recent Russian statistician of authority at 850,000.

describe them at present, further than to remark that they are the most vigorous and intelligent of the Transcaucasian races, with a gift for trade which has enabled them to get most of the larger business of the country into their hands. Their total number in these countries is estimated at 550,000.

Going down the Kur from Tiflis towards the Caspian, one finds the Georgians give place to a people whom the Russians call Tatars, and who are unquestionably a branch of the great Turkic family. When or how they settled here, no one can precisely tell, but it seems likely the earliest immigration was from the north, along the Caspian coast. There is no doubt that the Emperor Heraclius, in his long war with Persia in the middle of the seventh century, called in to his aid the Khazars, a Scythian tribe, from the Caspian steppe north of Derbend. Probably these Khazars were the first Turks who settled on this side the mountains; but many others must have come in afterwards from the south-east at the time of the great Seljukian conquests in the eleventh century. Veritable Turks these fellows certainly are, quite unlike the mongrel race who go by the name of the Turks in Europe, and much more resembling, in face, figure, and character, the pure undiluted Turkman of Khiva and the steppes of the Jaxartes. Being in some districts a settled and industrious race, they are, however, less wild-looking than the Turkmans, and remind one more of the grave and respectable Tatar of Kazan or the Crimea. Their villages, often mere burrows in the dry soil, are scattered all over the steppe eastward

to the Caspian, and southward as far as the Persian frontier. Many are agricultural, many more live by their sheep and cattle, which in summer are driven up towards the Armenian mountains and in winter return to the steppe; and some of them, settled in the larger towns, practise various handicrafts, and among others weave those rich carpets and other woollen fabrics which pass in the markets of Europe under the name of Persian, but really come from the south-west shores of the Caspian.

The Tatars are also the general carriers of the country. On the few roads, or oftener upon the open steppe, one sees their endless trains of carts, and more rarely their strings of camels, fetching goods from Shemakha, or Baku, or Tavriz, to Tiflis, thence to be despatched over the Dariel into Southern Russia, or by railway to Poti and Western Europe. The last of their occupations, the one in which they most excel, and which they have almost to themselves, is brigandage. To what extent it prevails, I cannot attempt to say, for, as every traveller knows, there is no subject, not even court scandal, on which one hears such an immense number of stories, some of them obviously exaggerated, many of them honestly related, most of them absolutely impossible to test. If we had believed a quarter part of what the quidnuncs of Tiflis told us, we should have thought the country seriously disturbed, and travelling, especially by night, full of peril. If we had gone by our own experience, we should have pronounced the steppes of the Kur a great deal safer than Blackheath Common. Stories

were always being brought into the city, and even appearing in the papers, of robberies, sometimes of murders, committed on the roads to Elizavetpol and Erivan; and along the latter road, we found the folk at the post stations with imaginations ready to see a Tatar behind every bush. Even the Russian officials at Tiflis, who of course desired to make little of anything that reflects on the vigilance of the government, advised us to be careful where we halted, and how we displayed any valuables. I cannot help believing, therefore, that robberies do sometimes occur, and no doubt it is the Tatars, or at least bands led by a Tatar chief, who perpetrate them. But the substantial danger is not really more than sufficient to give a little piquancy to travelling, and make you fondle your pistols with the air of a man who feels himself prepared for an emergency. In a dull country, far removed from the interests and movements of the Western world, the pleasure of life is sensibly increased when people have got the exploits of robbers to talk about. It is a subject level with the meanest imagination; the idle Georgian noble and the ignorant peasant enjoy it as heartily as Walter Scott himself.

Some of the tales related about these robbers remind one of the legends of Robin Hood and other high-minded outlaws, who relieved the rich in order to relieve the poor. It is told, for instance, of Dali Agha, who seems to be at this moment the most famous of these brigand chiefs, that, being in love with the daughter of a man of substance, her father refused to give her to him except for a large sum of

money. Dali was poor, but brave and sanguine; he demanded two years time to collect it, and when the father promised to wait for so long, he took to the road to collect the sum by robbery; and though the faithless father had married the girl to another suitor before the appointed time, he liked the profession so well that he has not quitted it.[1] He is at the head of a large band, and directs them to use all possible courtesy towards their victims, who are never killed except in case of necessity. Out of his plunder he gives freely to the poor, and is so much beloved that no one will betray him; once, while Cossacks were scouring the country after him, he was living quietly in Erivan under the governor's nose. A physician in government employment was travelling towards Elizavetpol to inspect the hospitals of his district, when he saw two suspicious persons on horseback a little way off, and drove faster on. As he turned the corner of a hill, three more appeared, and then a band, whose leader rode forward and wished him good evening. "Good evening," replied the doctor, who recognised the bandit. "I perceive you are in want of money; well, I haven't got much, only some hundred roubles; here they are in my trunk."—"I see you are a good man," says Dali; "on what business are you travelling?" The doctor explains that he is going to visit a hospital, and needs some little money to reach it, so begs Dali to let him have a couple of roubles, which will pay for the post-horses thither. "You shall

[1] A similar tale was told of the robber Arsen many years ago; so I dare say it is a stock incident, applied to every famous robber in turn, and may (who knows?) be a form of the Sun and Dawn myth.

have fifty," Dali answered, and, taking them from his followers, who had opened the trunk, "here they are for you. And on your way back, stop at this place; my men will meet you and bring you to me; you shall be my guest for the night."

Another time, some of the band seized a poor priest, who was travelling home with twenty-five roubles, which he had scraped together as a dowry for his daughter. Fearing for his life, he gives them the money, and is led to Dali, whom he finds in a thick wood, seated on a carpet-spread divan. Dali, seeing him to be a priest, receives him with respect—there is a good feeling between Mohammedans and Christians in some parts of these countries—makes him sit down, offers him coffee, sweetmeats, and a pipe, and hears the story of the dowry for the daughter's marriage. He apologizes for the conduct of his men, and, pointing to the bales of precious stuffs that lie around, bids the captive take out of them the worth of twenty-five roubles. The priest does so, and, finding that the robbers are not watching him, he pockets a good deal more, thinking, I suppose, that he was spoiling the Egyptians, and makes off with his booty. However, he is pursued and caught by some of the band, who had not understood that he was to be favourably treated. Brought back before Dali, he is in terror lest they should discover how much he has taken, and flings himself down to beg for his life. Dali interrupts him, repeats that he is sorry anything was taken from so poor a man. "It was an unfortunate mistake, but mistakes will sometimes occur,

and you must pardon it. Here, however, are twenty-five roubles; it is my gift to your daughter for her marriage portion; give them to her from Dali Agha and go in peace."

Whatever truth there is in such stories as these, they show the way in which the country people regard the robbers, and explain why brigandage still holds its ground against the efforts of the government. Some people give another reason, and say that the inferior officials do not care to put it down, but take a share of the spoils, and sometimes, when they have caught a notable robber, release him for a good round ransom which his friends will always pay. This I believe to be a calumny, though of course such a thing may have occurred once and again; the chief difficulty in the way of putting down brigandage is the vicinity of the Persian and Turkish dominions, into which marauders can easily escape, and whence the bands are constantly recruited by all sorts of adventurous spirits, who have lived under a government so bad that lawlessness seems justified. Take them all in all, these brigands, if they are not, as one of my informants said, "fine fellows who mean no harm," are evidently much better fellows than the members of their profession in Sicily or Greece, and deserve to be ranked with Dick Turpin or Claude Duval. Very different are the Turkman robbers who infest the road from the Caspian to Teheran, or those still fiercer tribes, described by Vámbéry, in the deserts of Khorassan and Bokhara, who carry off into cruel slavery all whom they do not kill on the spot.

Besides these four nations, and the Armenians who live scattered among them, there are plenty of Persians in Transcaucasia, especially towards the south-west angle of the Caspian, and on the Aras, beyond Erivan, a region which Russia acquired from Persia only in 1828. They are singularly unlike the Tatars, whose enemies they have been ever since the mythic times of Sohrab and Rustum, and have an even deeper cause of hatred than this old one of race, for while some of the Tatars, like the Osmanli Turks and the Turkmans, are Sunni Mohammedans, the Persians are Shiahs, who reject and abominate the three first Khalifs and honour Ali almost as much as the Prophet himself. Here, however, they live peaceably enough together. The Tatar is mostly tall and robust, with a round face, rather prominent cheekbones, a short nose, and small eyes. The Persian is slim, lithe, stealthy and cat-like in his movements; his face is long, of a clear yellowish tint, his eyes dark and rather large, nose aquiline, eyebrows delicately arched. The Tatar is inclined to be open; he is faithful to his word, and more inclined to force than to fraud; the Persian has the name of being the greatest liar in the East. "In Iran no man believes another" has become in these countries almost a proverb. With these moral disadvantages, the Persians are no doubt in many ways a superior race, industrious and polished even in the dregs of their civilization, after centuries of tyranny and misgovernment. In their time they produced great men, rulers such as Kai Khosru (the just Nushirvan) and Shah Abbas the Great; poets

like Firdusi and Omar Khayyám; metaphysicians whose names are hardly known in the West. Their carpets and silks and metal work are still full of exquisite taste and finish. But modern Persia, from all that one can hear, is more execrably misgoverned than Turkey itself. The duty of the governor of a province or town is simply to squeeze as much money as he can out of the inhabitants; his methods are the bastinado, impalement, crucifixion, burying up to the neck in the ground, and similar tortures.

Besides these aboriginal races, Georgians, Imeritians, and Armenians, and the incomers of old standing, such as Tatars and Persians,[1] there is what may be called a top-dressing of recent immigrants from Europe, mostly Russians and Germans. The Russians, with one exception, consist of the officials, who generally consider Russia as their home, almost as our Indian civilians consider England, and intend to return to it when their work is over. The exception is formed by the various sects of dissenters whom the government, fearing their disturbing political and social influence, has banished, or at least transferred, to these remote seats. They are mostly industrious, well-disposed people, morally, if not intellectually, above the level of the rest of the peasantry, who live in large villages, exactly like those of Central Russia, and keep themselves quite apart from the surrounding native population. Still more distinct are the Germans, of whom there are several colonies,

[1] A recent Russian statistical estimate gives the number of Turks and Persians in Transcaucasia at 790,000, that of the Steppe-Tatars at 90,000.

the largest, established in Tiflis, numbering some four or five thousand souls. They came hither from Würtemberg about sixty years ago, driven out by an obnoxious hymn-book. In respect of education and intelligence, they are of course far above any of the natives, while their Protestantism prevents them from intermarrying with, and therefore from sensibly affecting, their Russian neighbours. They have lost, if they ever possessed, the impulse of progress; their own farms are the best in the country, and their handicraftsmen in Tiflis superior to the Georgians or Persians; but they are content to go on in their old ways, not spreading out from the community, not teaching or in any way stimulating the rest of the population.

All these races live together, not merely within the limits of the same country, a country politically and physically one, but to a great extent actually on the same soil, mixed up with and crossing one another. In one part Georgians, in another Armenians, in a third Tatars, predominate; but there are large districts where Armenians and Georgians, or Armenians, Georgians, and Tatars, or Tatars and Persians, or Persians, Tatars, and Armenians, are so equally represented in point of numbers that it is hard to say which element predominates. This phenomenon—so strange to one who knows only the homogeneous population of West European countries, or of a country like America, where all sorts of elements are day by day being flung into the melting-pot, and lose their identity almost at once—comes

out most noticeably in the capital of Transcaucasia, the city of Tiflis. Here six nations dwell together in a town smaller than Brighton, and six languages are constantly, three or four more occasionally, to be heard in the streets. Varieties of dress, religion, manners, and physical aspect correspond to these diversities of race.

The traveller's or interpreter's *lingua franca* of Eastern and Southern Transcaucasia and the Caucasus generally is what the Russians call Tartar (or rather Tatar), but what we should call Turkish, as it differs from the Osmanli of Constantinople only in being somewhat rougher, and having adopted fewer foreign words. The official language, and that which in a civilized city like Tiflis is usually the general means of intercourse between persons of different nationalities, is Russian, which, in spite of its difficulty, is learnt and spoken by a great many Armenians and Persians, and by most of the German colonists. In Georgia itself and the region farther west, Imeritia and Mingrelia, Georgian carries one pretty well through, the dialects of these peoples apparently belonging to the same parent stock.

These peoples inhabit the more or less level country south of the Caucasus. Besides them, there is a multitude of mountain tribes of whom I have said something in the last preceding chapter, but who are far too numerous and too diverse in their character to be described at length. Probably nowhere else in the world can so great a variety of stocks, languages, and religions be found huddled together in so narrow an

area as in the Caucasian chain between the Euxine and the Caspian. It is as if every nation that passed from north to south, or west to east, had left some specimens of its people here behind to found a kind of ethnological museum. Of many of these tribes especially of those inhabiting Daghestan and the Eastern Caucasus generally, hardly anything is known, that is, scientifically known: I doubt if an enumeration of them exists in any book.

All these tribes and regions, both of the mountain and of the plain, have now accepted the rule of Russia. The country is quiet from sea to sea. Save for an occasional outbreak among the Suans when the tax-gatherer or land-surveyor makes his appearance, one may travel unharmed through mountain and plain with a small escort, or perhaps unescorted altogether. It is surprising enough when one remembers how unsafe places nearer home are, and how long it took to suppress private war and brigandage in civilized Europe. The Russian military organization deserves part of the credit, but even more is to be attributed to the sort of simplicity of manners which many of these tribes retain, to the absence of travellers to be plundered, to the isolation in which they live, separated from the world and one another by prodigious mountain masses. Some of them are pagans to this day, and others who, like the Suans, call themselves Christians, have preserved nothing of it but the internal arrangements of a church and one or two ceremonies whose meaning has been long since forgotten. Often they mix it with paganism, much in

the fashion of the Tcheremiss of whom Mr. Wallace tells the story that he sacrificed a foal to the Virgin Mary. There is a wonderful deal to be done in investigating the customs and beliefs, as well as the languages, of these people, and it is surprising to find that so few of those assiduous Germans who explore every corner of human knowledge should have been at work here.

That Russian influence, bringing science and civilization in its train, should not have penetrated the hidden nooks of these mountains, may well be understood. One is less prepared to find how little it has changed the accessible regions of Georgia and Mingrelia, where, although the capital is a little Paris in its way, the country parts remain much what they were a century ago. The reason, however, soon discloses itself to a traveller, that Russian government is before all things military. The first object thought of is the movement of troops, the organization of the army, the planting of fortresses and barracks. This was natural and necessary while the war in the Caucasus lasted, but since 1864, when the Tcherkesses of the west submitted, the same system seems to have been maintained. Such roads as have been made, and they are few, were made almost wholly for military purposes, and a sort of military atmosphere still pervades all Transcaucasia. While the Dariel military road cost £4,000,000, and Daghestan is traversed by two or three beautiful lines of road with iron bridges over the torrents, many fertile parts of European Russia are almost without any means of internal communication. An enormous army, something like

150,000 men, is kept in these provinces always on a war footing. Upon this force the government has had to spend vast sums, and consequently there has been neither the money nor the thought and care that are needed to bestow upon the material development of the land and the intellectual development of the people. Nor is this a process for which the Russians have yet proved themselves to have a gift. They have a wonderfully elaborate system of government, but the machinery is so complicated that the force is spent in making it move at all, and hardly reaches the material to be acted upon. The effect, therefore, considered as a means of improvement, is small in proportion to the cost (poorly as the *employés* are paid) and to the number of officials at work. And the civil service loses that sense of initiative which is so precious in half civilized countries. They go on working their bureaux among these Asiatics much as if they were in Novgorod or Riga, forgetting that what is wanted is not to maintain the existing state of things, but to improve it, to enlighten and stimulate these backward races.

For some time past the whole Caucasus (i.e. both Transcaucasia and the governments immediately north of the mountains) has formed a separate administrative division of the Russian empire, governed by a lieutenant who is directly responsible to the Czar.[1] The present lieutenant is the Grand Duke

[1] Transcaucasia and Daghestan consist of the following six governments, whose respective populations I append :—Tiflis, 650,000; Erivan, 436,000; Elizavetpol, 503,000; Baku, 486,000; Kutais, 650,000; Daghestan, 450,000.

Michael, a brother of Alexander II., who succeeded in 1867 to Prince Bariatinski, the conqueror of Shamyl. Like all, or nearly all, of the imperial family, he is personally courteous and popular, and is said to discharge his official duties well. The higher offices, both military and civil, are of course filled by Russians, many of them, as everywhere in the empire, of German extraction, or else by Armenians. All subjects, however, are admissible to office; this has been long a tradition of Russian administration, and it is no doubt one reason of its success in conciliating the good-will of its subjects, wherever there has not been, as in the dismal case of Poland, a vehement race and religious hatred to begin with between conquerors and conquered. The sort of good-nature and susceptibility to impressions which is so marked a feature in the Russian character makes them get on far better with strange races than either we, or the Dutch, or the Spaniards, have ever been able to do. It is not occasional acts of cruelty, it is not even a permanently repressive system, that makes conquerors hated nearly so much as coldness, hauteur, contempt, an incapacity to appreciate or sympathize with a different set of customs and ideas. Doubtless the English govern India far better than the Russians do their Asiatic dominions. That is to say, we do more to promote the welfare of the people and administer a pure justice, and we hold ourselves far more impartial in religious matters. For though Russia does not interfere with Islam, and has the prudence to respect the Armenian Church, she is hostile to both Roman Catholic and

Protestant missions, and does her best to advance her own church in every way. Nevertheless there does not seem to be either in the Caucasian countries or in the south and east of European Russia, where so many strange races live beneath the sceptre of the Czar, nearly so much bitterness of feeling among the subjects as there is towards ourselves in India, or to the French in Algiers now, and in the West Indies formerly. Perhaps this is partly because the Russians leave their subjects more to themselves, while we try to improve them: and the fact that in Georgia there is no distinction of faith or of colour between the two races has something to do with it. The Tatar Mohammedans, however, do not seem to have anything to complain of, either here or at Kazan on the Volga, where so many of them live, and one never hears that they are disaffected to the Czar, in spite of the long strife of the middle ages and the fanaticism of the Russian peasantry. So that, after all, there seems to be a good deal in the difference of manner with which we and they behave to inferior races. With us, every word and look betray a sense of immeasurable superiority. Sometimes we are brusque, sometimes we are politely condescending, but we are always at bottom contemptuous, and contempt makes deeper wounds than violence. In India and China the fault naturally reaches its climax, but the whole continent of Europe can hardly be wrong in accusing us of a milder form of it; indeed, every Englishman who is honest with himself must admit that whenever he travels in a foreign country, aye

even in France or Italy, he is conscious of some stirrings of this haughty insular spirit. The Spaniards are more offensive in this regard than ourselves; among the Romans there must have been plenty of it in their era of conquest; the Americans, with all their self-complacency, are comparatively free from it. But the Russians have really very little of it. Perhaps they would be stronger if they had more; but at any rate its absence largely covers or atones for some of their defects as a conquering and governing power.

The upshot of this digression is that Transcaucasia is on the whole a fairly contented and peaceable part of the Czar's dominions, and that this is due partly to the apathy of the Russians, partly to their good-nature, partly to their being in religious matters in sympathy with the faith of so large a part of their subjects. Last autumn, when war with Turkey was daily expected, no one seemed to have any fear of an insurrection even among the Lesghians, though it is only some twenty years since they used to swoop down from the mountains and carry off landowners from their country-houses a few stages out of Tiflis. Since Shamyl's surrender in 1859, there has been but one attempt at a rising in Daghestan, and that speedily ended by the head of the leader being sent by his own people to the Russians at Tiflis. As I write these lines, news comes of a disturbance among the Mohammedan Tchetchens, who live to the north of the Caucasus, south-east of Vladikavkaz. It is hardly likely to prove serious; and the idea which some people in Europe seem to entertain of its spreading westward

to the Black Sea, where the Turks are said to have effected a landing, and of a general rising among the Caucasian tribes, is too wild to deserve refutation. The Circassians, whom the Turks are supposed to be endeavouring to excite, hardly exist in this country; they perished or emigrated in 1864; the Abhasians, who are left along the coast about Sukhum, are few and inert; the Imeritians, Mingrelians, and Gurians towards Batum, are Christians, a people not much inclined to fight for anybody, and certainly not against the Czar; among the remaining tribes there is no community in race, language, or religion which could enable them to co-operate were they ever so disaffected. The only thing that could make an insurrection among any of them dangerous to Russian movements would be a seizure of the Dariel military road, and of that there is no likelihood.

The same laws, the same mechanism of courts, the same educational system, omitting diversities of detail, obtain in these provinces as in European Russia. The great emancipation of the serfs, which here took place on the 1st of December, 1866, was carried out much upon the same lines as elsewhere; the peasantry of Georgia and Mingrelia, where serfdom prevailed from the middle ages downwards, are now all free, and the ancient, semi-feudal jurisdictions of the Mingrelian and Imeritian nobles have been replaced by the new-modelled Russian courts. Practically, indeed, education is still more backward than it is in Europe. There are comparatively few elementary schools; the upper schools are said to

be poor, and are much hampered by difficulties of language, for the school-books in every subject are Russian, though Russian is a foreign tongue to the immense majority of the pupils. There is no university nearer than Kharkof or Odessa; the necessity for one in Tiflis is admitted, but the money is not forthcoming, since considerable salaries would be needed to tempt learned men so far from home, and all the money that can be got is wanted for the army and railways. Of literature, one of course expects to find very little, and except in the capital there is no public to care for it. Agriculture is much what it may have been five centuries ago, witness the implements used. The plough is a ruder contrivance than that which Hesiod describes; no wonder that a large team is needed to drag it through the hard dry earth. Just outside the houses of Tiflis I have seen no less than sixteen oxen yoked to a single plough. The want of a market discourages improvements in tillage, as well as trade generally, for although there is a railway to the Black Sea, with steamers thence to Odessa and Constantinople, as well as one or two great roads through the country, such as that to Erivan, there are no roads of the second order to bring produce to the railway from places lying even a few miles away. The manufactures, as already remarked, are mostly of what we should call Persian goods, or of arms, which the Georgians chase most tastefully, and other articles in metal, silver flagons, belts, daggers, and so forth. Things needed for ordinary life, such as cutlery, crockery, glass, paper, cotton goods, are mostly

brought from European Russia. What export trade there is—and it is not, considering the resources to be drawn upon, of any great consequence—is mostly in carpets and silks, made in the Tatar country towards the Caspian or among the Persians of Lenkoran, naphtha from Baku, and woods, especially box-wood and walnut roots, from Mingrelia and the south-west slopes of the Caucasus. Nature has made the country rich, but the course of events has not brought to it that which a country needs to develop its riches, capital and enterprise. Both must come from without, and at present Russia can spare neither. Her capital is all wanted at home; her peasants, except some sects of dissenters who have been deported hither by the Czars, have not crossed the mountains to colonize, nor are they the sort of colonists that change the face of a country as Americans do. They are uneducated, attached to their old ways, unreceptive of new ideas even in a new land.

If it is hard to convey an impression of the general character of Transcaucasia, the reason possibly is that it has not one general character, but two or three. It is like a mixed tissue, whose colour seems to vary according as the light falls this way or that upon it. There is no place in Europe except Constantinople, and probably few places in the world, where one feels in the middle, so to speak, of so many cross-currents, so many diverse associations of the past and possibilities for the future. Perhaps this puzzling, pleasing complexity, creating a desire to predict as well as to explain, and a sense of the difficulty of prediction, is

the thing which makes the country so full of interest. It is Eastern—Eastern not only in the dry, bare glowing landscape (I speak chiefly of the Caspian basin), but in the look of the villages, the bazaars, the agriculture, the sense of immobility. Yet many Oriental features are wanting. It is Christian, to begin with. The ruined castles of the nobility, with peasants' dwellings clustering beneath them, have an air of Western feudalism. In the large towns, and along the great roads, one feels the influence of Russia, and the influence of Russia, superficially at least, suggests the influence of France. The streets are filled with men in uniform; the hotels, where the town is big enough to have more than a wretched *duchan*, or public-house, are kept by Frenchmen. You have intelligence and polish in the towns, and in the country the blankest ignorance and the most primitive rudeness. The telegraphic wire runs along a road on each side of which there lie regions almost unexplored, whose inhabitants worship unknown deities and speak unknown tongues. This contrast gives all the idea of a new country, like Western America or one of our colonies; yet here one feels at every step that the country is old, with a civilization which, though it never blossomed, never quite withered up, a civilization older than our own. Seeing the ancient churches and castles, most of which have some legend attached to them (though such legends are as seldom poetical as they are trustworthy), one has an odd sort of sense of being in a country which has had a history, but a history that never emerged from twilight, which nobody knows,

and which is perhaps hardly worth the knowing. In Eastern Russia and Siberia you acquiesce in the fact that there never was any history; the past is a blank, and must remain so. In Asia Minor, on the other hand, you are within the circle of Greek and Roman civilization; everybody, from Herodotus downwards, has something to tell of its cities and peoples. But Georgia, and the regions immediately round it, have been always the frontier land of light and darkness, a battlefield of hostile empires and religions; first of the Roman empire and the Persians, then of Christianity and fire-worship, then of Christianity and Islam, then of Persians and Turks, lastly of Russia against both the Sultan and the Shah. One finds traces in the buildings and the art of the people of all these influences—of the Greek traders who frequented the markets of the Euxine; of the Byzantine emperors, who held sometimes more, sometimes less of the country, Justinian having pushed forward his garrisons as far as the Upper Kur and Heraclius as far down as Tavriz; of the Genoese, who monopolized the Black Sea trade in the later days of Byzantine rule, and had their settlements all round its coasts; of the Persians and Armenians, who came as conquerors or immigrants. There is a wonderful harvest awaiting the archæologist here, and the labourers are still few.

With this curious sense of a complex and almost unexplored past, the traveller has a still stranger feeling of perplexity as to the future. Transcaucasia is so rich by nature, so important by position, that nobody can doubt it has a considerable part to play

in history. What will that part be? Are commerce and culture likely to advance? Can Russia maintain her hold on these peoples? Will they themselves be melted down into one nation, and if so, what is the element, out of the many now contending, that will ultimately prevail?

So far, little or no assimilation among the various races of the country has taken place. In the towns they get somewhat more mixed together as trade grows and communications are opened up. But they are not fused, and with one insignificant exception they do not seem on the way to become fused. For this there are several obvious causes. The chief races are in point of numbers pretty equally balanced, so that no one of them is able to absorb the other. Neither is any one sufficiently superior in intellect and force of character to take the lead and impress its type upon the whole mass. The Russians, as being the rulers and the most civilized, might be expected to be able to effect this, but it must be remembered that they are not very numerous, consisting only of the upper officials, of the soldiers, who are a transitory element in the population, and of some isolated settlements of dissenting peasants. Moreover, they are not thoroughly civilized themselves, and cannot impart what they have not got. Civilization in Russia is like a coat of paint over unseasoned wood; you may not at first detect the unsoundness of the material, but test it, and it fails. A further obstacle is to be found in the differences of language and manners between the various Transcaucasian

peoples, differences greater than those that separate Frenchmen from Spaniards or even from Englishmen; differences which might of course yield to the influences of commerce and a common participation in the working of free institutions, but which prolong themselves from generation to generation under a bureaucratic despotism which treats the people merely as taxpayers to be kept in order, which does something for them, but nothing by or through them. General compulsory service in the army, which has not yet been introduced here, might in time diminish this sense of separation; nothing else seems likely to do so.

Finally, and this is the chief cause of the mutual repulsion of the atoms, there is the religious difficulty. It is of course greatest between the Tatars, the Lesghians, Tchetchens, and other Caucasian peoples, and the Persians, all of whom are Mohammedans of the Sunni or Shiah persuasion, and the Christians. So far as one can see, there is not much active Mohammedan fanaticism in these countries; even among the Lesghians it has very much cooled down from the heat of Shamyl's days. No one in Tiflis seemed last autumn to fear that the Czar might be embarrassed in any war with Turkey by the disaffection of his own Muslem subjects. The Persians hate all Turks worse than they hate Christians, and may even, to the extent of their very limited power, side with Russia in the quarrel. The Tatars are a simple folk of shepherds, carriers, highwaymen, with no sense of the "solidarity of the Turkish race," and no desire to draw the sword against the infidel. But since religion

is the main influence that governs the lives of these peoples, is indeed the only intellectual life they have, and makes itself felt in all their customs and sympathies, it erects a barrier hardly to be crossed between them and the Christians. The Armenian peasantry of the Araxes valley seem to live much in the same way as their Tatar neighbours; their villages are little better, nor are they less illiterate. But one never hears of intermarriages nor any sort of *rapprochement* between them. Among the Christians themselves, the separate existence and strongly national character of the Armenian Church keeps its children apart not only from Protestant Germans, but from those who own the Orthodox Eastern faith. And it is really only where such a religious repulsion does not exist, as, for instance, between Russians and Georgians, that any social amalgamation goes on.

An able traveller who visited these countries several years ago, and has written some interesting remarks upon them,[1] suggests the probability of their growing into a Transcaucasian state independent of Russia. Admitting that the army and the administration of the Caucasus have already a certain amount of distinctive character, the facts above stated seem to oppose themselves to such a prospect. To an observer in Tiflis now there seems hardly more likelihood of a Russian hero, however able or ambitious, making himself the sovereign of a kingdom of the Caucasus than there is of a Viceroy of India revolting from the English Queen.

[1] Mr. Ashton Dilke, in the 'Fortnightly Review,' some years ago.

There is no unity among these races, no common national feeling to appeal to, nothing on which a national kingdom could be based. Nothing, in fact, keeps them together but the Russian army and administration, and the loyalty of both these to the Czar is that which keeps Russia herself together, rising as it does almost to the dignity of a national worship. A very extraordinary concurrence of circumstances must be imagined to make the rebellion of a Russian general have any prospect of success, while a peaceable separation of these provinces, so valuable in a strategical point of view, is even less likely. Moreover, they are every day being brought nearer and nearer to the heart of the empire. Since the completion of the railway from Rostof on the Don to Vladikavkaz at the north foot of the Caucasus, the post which leaves Moscow on Sunday night can reach Tiflis on the Friday morning, having to traverse only 126 miles of road from the terminus to Tiflis itself. The project of a railway over the mountains to supersede even this piece of road travelling, and to enable troops to step into a railroad car on the Neva and step out of it on the Kur, is not likely to be carried out for many years to come, for its cost would be prodigious, and other military communications, that, for instance, from Orenburg to Tashkend, are more pressing. But as Southern Russia fills up by the movement of population which is continually going on from north to south, the Transcaucasians will seem less and less remote, and will be connected by more active relations of trade and social intercourse

with the European side of the Caucasus. Already the opening of the railway to Poti on the Black Sea, whence steamers run regularly to the Crimea and Odessa, has made intercourse with the mother country easier and more frequent, and strengthens the unity of sentiment between Holy Russia and her children in these outlying provinces.

Improbable, however, as the separation of Transcaucasia seems, its Russianization, in anything more than administration, seems almost as distant. It is not well governed, being like so much else in the Empire both over-administered and ill-administered. In material prosperity, in the diffusion of light, morality, refinement, it is advancing very slowly. Germans, or Frenchmen, or Americans, would probably have effected far more in seventy years of occupation than the Russians have done. But compare it with the condition of Georgia or Mingrelia under their own princes, or, still better, compare it with that of the neighbouring territories of the Sultan or the Shah, which are daily going back, where there is absolutely no security for life, honour, or property, and its fortunes appear happy indeed.

CHAPTER IV.

TIFLIS.

THE capital of Transcaucasia is a type of the country. It is a city of contrasts and mixtures, a melting-pot into which elements have been poured from half Europe and Asia, and in which they as yet show no signs of combining.

It stands on the Kur, which is here a swift, turbid stream, just above the point where it emerges from the upland country into the great steppe that stretches away to the Caspian. High hills of a shaly limestone and schist enclose it on all sides, those on the south rising some 800 to 1200 feet above the river. They are not very picturesque hills, especially after May, when the herbage on them is utterly burnt away by the heats, and they stand out bare, brown, and stern, with no colour except when the setting sun bathes them for a moment in a purple glow. Even so, however, they give the city a character one would not like to miss. Besides, they shelter it from the cold blasts that rush down in winter from the Caucasus, so that the winter climate is one of the pleasantest in these latitudes, warm and equable, yet not nearly so damp as that of the Black Sea

coast.[1] While the steppe of the Lower Kur is covered with snow and swept by bitter north-easters, consumptive patients can here go out all the winter through. The mean temperature of the year is a little lower than that of Rome, which is in the same latitude, while the mean of the adjoining steppe is that of Northern France. On the other hand, Tiflis is intolerably hot and close in summer. Down in this hollow, where not a breath of air can reach you from the mountains you descry, where the sun's rays are reflected from bare slopes and white houses, where often not a shower will fall for months together, one gasps and pants, one is not merely scorched, but stifled. I have repeatedly seen thunderstorms play all round the town, sheets of rain descending a few miles off, and the streets lit up at night by the flashes, when scarcely a drop would fall in Tiflis itself. Add to this that the water is scarce and indifferent, and the dust truly Oriental, and it is easy to understand that summer is not the time to enjoy the Transcaucasian capital. So in summer, pretty nearly every one who can afford it, and can get free from his official duties, makes off to the hills. The court, that is to say, the Grand Duke, who is the sun of this system, and his attendant planets, the adjutants, go to Borjom, a charming spot among wooded mountains eighty miles to the west-north-west, in the upper valley of the Kur. Others cross the Caucasus to Pjätigorsk or Kislovodsk, favourite watering-places at the northern base of Elbruz; a few go by way of Odessa to Europe. Towards the middle of September they begin to

[1] Tiflis is 1335 feet above the sea: its annual rainfall 19 inches.

return, and by November society is again in full swing.

The hills which I have mentioned break down pretty steeply towards the river, and it is chiefly on the lower slope of those lying on its right or south-western bank, which are much the higher, that the town is built, descending in terraces towards the river, whose course is here (speaking generally) south-east. At the east end of the city two rocky spurs almost meet, the Kur forcing its way in rapids and eddies between them. On the north-east side stands the citadel, which is now also the prison, and the ancient Georgian cathedral; behind it, on a sort of terrace, are the enormous barracks. The opposite rocks are crowned by the picturesque ruins of a Persian fortress, whence we discover the long wooded line of the outermost mountains of Daghestan, and, in clear weather, the glittering snows of Kazbek, rising over the watershed which divides Europe from Asia. These irregularities of surface, with the swift stream rushing through between precipitous banks, give a great charm to Tiflis, and make it look much larger than it really is. The views over it are very striking, not that the individual buildings are fine, for they are nearly all modern, and, like so much modern Russian work, handsomely uninteresting; but the mass of houses with groves and gardens interspersed, the stern brown setting of hills, the motley throng just visible upon the bridges, the glimpses of far-away mountains, make up a *coup d'œil* not easily forgotten. I

cannot recall any European city that resembles it. People have compared it to Prague, but Prague is as much inferior in situation as it is superior in architectural beauty. Toledo, too, has been suggested, but the likeness seemed to me to begin and end with grim brown hills and a turbid stream.

Seen from above, Tiflis is one continuous city, interrupted only by public or private gardens here and there. But in reality it consists of three perfectly distinct towns, unlike in their origin, their buildings, their population. First, there is the Russian town, all new, bright, showy, and, externally at least, clean. It is on the south-west bank of the river, rising steeply towards the hills, and is, of course, the fashionable residential quarter, as well as the region of the best shops, the opera-house, public offices, and so forth. The streets are wide and straight; the houses high, all new-looking, and all as like one another as in Paris or Chicago. Rows of trees are planted in front of European shops with plate-glass windows. This part, indeed, has only grown up within the last sixty years. Here live the court—the Grand Duke has a handsome palace fronting to the principal street, called, in St. Petersburg fashion, Golovinski Prospekt—and, indeed, pretty nearly all the officials, besides a certain number of rich Armenians. You might fancy yourself in Odessa, or one of the newer and better suburbs of Moscow.

To the east of this Russian town, and lying deep down in the hollow along the river, is old Tiflis, a genuine Eastern city, with its narrow crooked streets, ill-paved or not paved at all, and houses of one or

two stories only, the whole horribly dirty, yet incomparably more picturesque than the smart propriety of the modern town. Each of the principal trades has a street or streets, or a covered arcade in the bazaar, entirely to itself: thus in one street you find the dealers in arms, in a second the leather-sellers, in a third the jewellers, in a fourth the carpet merchants, in a fifth the furriers, on whose walls hang the skins of Caucasian bears and Hyrcanian tigers. The ground-floor room of the house is open to the street, from which it is generally raised a step or two; here the dealer squats on a piece of matting, surrounded by his assistants, with his wares hung or stowed round the walls behind and in the room which is visible at the back. If he practises a handicraft, he works at it here in the sight of all men, just as in some old-fashioned English villages the shoemaker may still be seen sitting in his front room open to the air, and hammering away at a solid boot sole, much more solid than anything that comes from an Eastern last. Thus, as you pick your way down the lanes, jostled into the middle by the crowd, and in the middle nearly run over by the impetuous droshkies, you can see the whole industry of the place in full swing; bread is being baked in one street, swords forged in another, cloth woven in a third. There is no department in which the artizans are particularly strong, except perhaps in the making of ornamental arms, such as pistols and daggers, and of silver cups and flagons, the designs on which are often very beautiful. One sees a great many exposed for sale, but

I fancy the best are of some considerable age; nor is there much inventiveness in the modern workman; he goes on repeating these old models as if he were a British architect, which is perhaps, in the present dearth of invention, the best thing he can do. The value of the old silver goods is well known; it is little use hoping for a bargain where so many Russian buyers are about, and where the sellers are mostly Armenian. Pretty things, especially belts, are still made in what is called niello work. The jewellery rather disappointed us. So near Persia one expects to see splendid turquoises at least, not to speak of gold work emeralds and rubies, quite abundant. Though we spent hours in the jewellers' street, it is possible we may have missed the best shops, for out of the great number of turquoises shown us, though some were big, very few were of a specially fine colour. It is true that the small ones were considerably cheaper than in St. Petersburg; perhaps the finest are bought up in Persia to be sent direct thither or to Constantinople. The settings are mostly very simple and uniform. What pleased us best were the great dark rooms, running away back from the streets, in which the carpet dealers, most of whom are Persians or Tatars, keep their goods stocked, the darkness being not only pleasant in summer, but a sensible advantage to the seller. Here a wonderful variety of all kinds of rugs, mats, and carpets may be seen, the best, perhaps, Persian from Tavriz and Khorassan, but plenty of other kinds, little, if indeed at all, inferior, from

Shemakha and Nukha, on the road to Baku, and from Kurdistan and the valley of the Tigris. As everybody carries his rug with him when he travels, and as the rougher kinds are also used for packing bundles of more delicate goods, there is a considerable consumption of such articles beyond the needs of house furnishing, and a pretty large import trade in them from the east and south. We bought several and priced a great many more. Comparing these prices with those demanded in London for similar articles, we concluded that carpets are at Tiflis about forty per cent. cheaper, a difference which of course represents a good deal more than the cost of carriage thence to England.

The crowd, noise, and bustle of this Eastern town are at their highest on the bridge which in the middle of it spans the Kur, whose waves, breaking against the cliffs that enclose it, are hardly heard over the din of voices, loud and harsh as the voices of Orientals usually are. Hard by is the road leading to the neighbouring eastern gate, through which all the traffic flows in from Armenia, Persia, and the steppe; now a string of camels, now troops of donkeys laden with fruit or charcoal, now the rough, slow, solid-wheeled bullock carts of the country, now a party of mounted Cossacks clattering over the pavement. Piles of fruit from the German gardens strew the ground, mixed with huge bullock-skins full of Kakhitian wine. From the rocks above the grim walls of the citadel frown down, and beside them appears the grey cupola of the most ancient among the

Georgian churches; nearer, and half hidden by the confused mass of houses, you see the domes and minarets of the rival mosques of the Sunni Tatars and the schismatic Persian Shiahs. One can hardly believe that a Russian Paris is only half a mile away.

Quitting this district, ascending the southern bank of the river, and crossing it by the principal bridge, which is adorned by a statue of Prince Woronzof, the famous governor of Transcaucasia, one enters a third quarter, equally unlike either of the two I have just been trying to describe. You forget Russia, you forget Asia: you fancy yourself on the banks of the Swabian Neckar. This is the German settlement, still called by everybody "The Colony," which was originally quite a distinct town, and has only in the recent growth of Tiflis become united to it by a continuous line of houses. It is inhabited by Germans, the descendants of emigrants who came hither from Würtemberg sixty years ago, driven from their homes by a new hymn-book which their prince insisted on forcing upon his subjects, and which they considered too lax in its statements of doctrine. The Russian government, always delighted to secure industrious and peaceable colonists, received them warmly, placed them first near Odessa, and ultimately, at their own wish, transferred them hither. Here they have dwelt ever since, not increasing much in numbers, though some few have joined them from Germany, preserving all their old ways and habits, cherishing their Protestant faith, and singing out of their dear old hymn-book. Rows of trees run along the principal street; breweries

and beer-gardens border it, where the honest burgher sits at night and listens over his supper to a band, as his cousins are doing at the same hour in the suburbs of Stuttgart. Tidy little *Fraus* come out in the evening cool to the doorsteps, and knit and chat among their fair-haired Karls and Gretchens. They have their own schools, far better than any which Russian organization produces; they are nearly all Protestants, with a wholesome Protestant contempt for their superstitious Georgian and Armenian neighbours. They speak nothing but German among themselves, and show little or no sign of taking to Russian ways or letting themselves be absorbed by the populations that surround them. It was very curious to contrast this complete persistency of Teutonism here with the extraordinarily rapid absorption of the Germans among other citizens which one sees going on in those towns in the Western States of North America, where—as in Milwaukee, for instance —the inhabitants are mostly German, and still speak English with a markedly foreign accent. But of course, when one thinks about it, the phenomenon is simple enough. Here they are exiles from a higher civilization planted in the midst of a lower one; there they lose themselves among a kindred people, with whose ideas and political institutions they quickly come to sympathise.

Unluckily these good Swabians have done less to diffuse their superior civilization than might have been expected. This is said to be the case with nearly all the German colonies on Russian soil: they have

most of them retained their own industry and thrift, while some of them, particularly the Mennonites (who may be compared with our Quakers or Moravian Brethren), have thriven wonderfully. But they have not leavened and improved the general population of the country. The difference of religion is probably at the bottom of this separation. It prevents intermarriages, for there is a most objectionable law in Russia, comparable to those which the English formerly enforced in Ireland, which requires the children of a mixed marriage to be brought up in the Orthodox Eastern faith even if neither of the parents has belonged to that communion. And where there can be no intermarriage, there is, after all, but little familiar intercourse. However, I do not attempt to explain the fact, but mention it as a curious instance of the disappointment of what seemed a statesman-like plan. For it was chiefly with the view of teaching her Russian subjects habits of thrift and better modes of agriculture that Catherine II. tempted so many German colonies into Southern Russia; as it was the example of those colonies which induced these later ones to follow.

The German population of Tiflis may, at present, amount to some five or six thousand souls. Most of them are artizans, or gardeners—gardening is almost entirely abandoned to them by the lazy Georgians—only a few are shopkeepers or merchants. Of course, most of the men of science, and a pretty good proportion of government *employés*, belong to the *Culturvolk*; but these are mostly stray wanderers from the Baltic

Provinces, or from old Germany itself, not home-bred colonists. They are friendly, pleasant people, among whom an Englishman soon feels himself at home, and who are ready to show him every kindness. I should be ungrateful indeed not to acknowledge the help and advice we received from several among them, and which in some cases were given by persons to whom we had not brought introductions.

Although there are but three distinct towns in Tiflis, there are at least six distinct nations. Besides the Russians and Germans, of whom I have spoken already, the Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, and Persians, all contribute sensibly large elements to the population. The Georgians are at home, and may probably be the most numerous; amongst the motley faces in the streets their type seemed the most common. Most of them are nobles, as has been said already, and most of them are poor; they form probably one-third of the day labourers and servants. As the men generally wear European coats and trousers in the town, though in the country a dress much like the Circassian is common among the better class, they are not so easily recognised for Georgians as the women, whose singular head-gear—a square cloth cap ornamented with a kind of crown, from which there hangs down over the shoulders a long white gauze veil—makes them wonderful ornaments of the streets. Formerly they cultivated an Oriental reserve. I remember to have read some traveller who, writing forty years ago, says that in the town he could see none but old and withered faces.

They have changed all that now: no belles of Scarborough or Saratoga promenade a public garden with more nonchalance than the daughters of the first Georgian families in Tiflis. They are certainly a splendid race to look at, these Georgians, both men and women, but I doubt if they are anything more. They have never produced anything in literature or art; they have never had but one remarkable man, and that was a woman—I mean Queen Tamara; they fell into the hands of the Russians because they could not resist the effete despotism of Persia; and now though they do not really like the Russians, and will give you to understand as much on the sly, I do not suppose they would ever raise a finger against them. Perhaps their spirit has been broken by the long and unequal struggle which they, always a small nation, had to maintain against such bitter foes as Turks and Persians. One ought to compare them, not with European peoples, but with semi-civilized races who have been enslaved by foreigners. And it may well be that they have mended since the Persian yoke was broken, and will mend still further. Certainly they have, if the account which Chardin gives of them, in the seventeenth century, when Tiflis was held by a Persian garrison, was a fair one, or anything more than one of those proverbial bits of exaggeration by which travellers, long before the days of sensation writing, liked to heighten the effect of their narratives. This is what he says of our poor Georgians:—

"The Georgians are naturally very witty, and would be as learned men and great artists as any are in the

world if they had the improvements of arts and sciences: but having a mean education and bad examples, they are drowned in vice, are cheats and knaves, perfidious, ungrateful, and proud. They are irreconcileable in their enmities, for though they are not easily provoked, they preserve their hatred inviolable. Drunkenness and luxury are such common vices among them that they are not scandalous in Georgia. The churchmen will be as drunk as others: yea and they say that he that is not drunk at their great festivals of Easter and Christmas cannot be a good Christian, and deserves to be excommunicated. The women are as generally vicious as the men, and contribute more than they to that general debauchery which overflows the country."

The most conspicuous figures in the streets, next to the Georgian ladies, are the clerics, whose jolly faces are surmounted by huge cylindrical hats, from which depend long veils of a sort of black crape, while a robe of black serge, with immense sleeves, covers the body to the ankles. It is curious to any one who remembers France, Italy, or Spain, to see so many ecclesiastical countenances in which there is neither asceticism nor priestcraft, nor indeed any professional expression except a sort of vacuous and self-complacent good-humour, the good-humour of a lazy man who has plenty to eat and drink. When there meets you a keener or more restless glance, you may be sure that it comes from an Armenian eye.

The Armenians are a large and apparently an increasing element of the population, easily known by

their swarthy complexion and peculiar physiognomy. They are the most vigorous and pushing people in the country, and have got most of its trade into their hands, not only the shop-keeping, but the larger mercantile concerns. A good many, too, are in the Russian service, and have thriven in it; in fact, more than half the *employés* in Transcaucasia are said to be Armenians. Like most successful people, they are envied and ill-spoken of, possibly calumniated, by their less energetic neighbours. Sharp men of business they certainly are, thrifty, able to drive a hard bargain, and sticking wonderfully together. Among them there are several persons of learning and ability, and as their education improves and their wealth increases, the number of such persons is likely to grow; so that altogether one seems to see a considerable future before them. Although they get on well enough with the Russians, they do not much mix or intermarry either with them or the Germans, but have a society of their own, which is quite self-sufficing.

The Persians in Tiflis are said to number 10,000, all of whom live in the older part of the city, to whose picturesqueness those of the better sort add a good deal by their long dark or yellowish brown robes and pointed hats of black lambs-wool. Tiflis was once under direct Persian rule, and for a much longer time under Persian supremacy, so that one may believe this Iranian population has remained here ever since, and need not suppose any recent immigration. A few are mer-

chants, driving a trade in carpets, silks, and the other goods of their country; the rest are handicraftsmen. Some trades they have almost appropriated, particularly that of masons, in which they are said to excel all the other workmen of these countries. They live upon next to nothing, are steady workers, and have not yet learnt to organize strikes.

The Tatars are probably about as numerous as the Persians, but as many of them are carriers coming to and fro from the Caspian coast and Persia, they are more a floating than a settled population. They are all poor people, have a good name for industry and sobriety, do a great deal of the unskilled labour, and keep all the baths, an important profession in an Eastern city. All are of course Mohammedans, some of the Sunni persuasion; but a probably large number, especially of those from the Persian border, are Shiahs.

Besides these six leading races, Tiflis is full of all sorts of nondescript people from different parts of the Caucasus. The nurses are all, we hear, Ossetes—Georgian women object to domestic service—and thus many children grow up able to speak that interesting language, which used to be thought near of kin to the Teutonic tongues, though their identification with the Germans, which rested only on two or three words, and a taste for a liquor something like beer, has now been abandoned.

Imeritians, Mingrelians, and even Abhasians from the Black Sea coast, not unfrequently come here

looking for work; occasionally one recognises the delicate aquiline features and keen eyes of a Lesghian, armed to the teeth, from the mountains of Daghestan. Even Europe is not wholly unrepresented, for although there are very few Italians or English—of the latter I met three only: one a Russianized photographer, the second an agent of the Bible Society, and the third a new arrival, who had started a general store, and was doing a rattling business in cutlery and bitter beer—there are, besides Poles, plenty of Frenchmen, hotel-keepers, upholsterers, dyers and cleaners of cloth, confectioners, and, above all, hairdressers. So strangely mixed a population it would be hard to find anywhere, even in the East. You never can guess what language the men who pass you in the street are talking; it may be any one of some eight or nine that are spoken almost equally. We of course could only distinguish French and German, and sometimes Russian, but the friends who walked beside us would say from time to time: "These fellows are talking Armenian, or Tatar, or Georgian, or Osset, or Persian," as the case might be. The commonest is Russian, not that they are the most numerous class, but because, being the official language, it is the second language most frequently learned by persons of every nation in addition to their own. Thus pretty nearly all the Germans, at least the men, speak Russian, and I fancy most of the Armenians also, as they are excellent linguists, and more ambitious to rise than the Georgians. On the shop fronts are seen names written in Russian, French, German, Armenian, and Georgian, more rarely

in Persian. There are very few Jews; perhaps the Armenians leave no room for them.

Tiflis, whose native name, Tbilisi, is said to be derived from a Georgian word meaning hot, and to refer to the warm springs, is a place of some historical note. Tradition says that the first fort was erected here by a lieutenant of the Sassanid kings of Persia in A.D. 380, and that at it, seventy-five years later, the reigning monarch of Georgia, Vaktang Gurgaslan, founded a city, to which, in the beginning of the following century, his son Datchi transferred the seat of government, attracted by the hot sulphureous baths. Compared, however, to the antiquity of the former capital, Mtzkhet (twelve miles to the north-west), which was founded by a great-great-great-grandson of Noah, Tiflis appears a settlement of yesterday. Like most cities in these countries, it has been so often destroyed in war that hardly anything remains from primitive times; nothing, indeed, except the old cathedral on the citadel hill, already mentioned, called the Melekhi, which is attributed to King Vaktang. Of these devastations, the most ruinous were those which it suffered from Timur in the fourteenth century, and from the savage Persian Aga Mohammed Khan in 1795, in the invasion which led the last Georgian king to cede to the Czar the country he could not defend. When the Russians came, it was a very small place, confined to the region round the lowest bridge, of which I have spoken already; even in 1834 it had but 25,000 inhabitants. Latterly, what with the general growth of the country, and with the concentration

of trade at this particular point, where several lines of road meet the railway to the Black Sea, it has grown very fast, and may now have a population of 80,000 or more. Building still goes on, and house rents are inordinately high.

Its newness gives the city one merit, which most travellers, whatever they may say, will secretly appreciate. It has no sights. You have no picture galleries, churches, monuments, museums, manufactories, arsenals, green vaults, and so forth, duly noted in your guide-book, which a sense of duty, an odious feeling that when you have returned home, you will be ashamed not to have done them, drives you to see. It is a place where you may settle down in your hotel and do just as you please, saunter forth in the morning to buy grapes, and mingle with the many-tongued throngs in the meat and fruit market, doze away the sultry afternoon upon a sofa, and in the evening cool drive out to call on some friend, or sit in the public garden, under the mellow southern moon, and hear the band discourse military music till near midnight. As there are no buildings older than the seventeenth century, always excepting the little old Melekhi church, and nothing at all remarkable since then, no collections, except a museum, which is interesting, so far as it goes, and very nicely arranged and kept, but small when one considers the resources of the country in the way of minerals, animals, and antiquities; and a botanic garden, also well managed by a German botanist, but languishing for want of funds, there is really nothing for the visitor to do except lounge and

amuse himself by watching the dresses and manners of the motley crowd. In fact, the town itself is a museum; the inhabitants are the sight of Tiflis, quite sufficient to keep curiosity alive for days and weeks together.

Besides a multitude of caravanserais and *duchans* (= small inns or taverns) frequented by the natives, there are three hotels, two of them at least, and I fancy the third also (which had only lately been set up), kept by Frenchmen, and situated in the fashionable new town near the market and the so-called Sololaki or new residential quarter. One of the two older hotels has an established reputation for good cooking and extortion; so we chose the other, and found it clean and reasonably comfortable. The charges are high, as usually in the East, but lower than those of St. Petersburg or Constantinople. Of the inner social life of the city, I cannot say much, for the good reason that I did not see it. All that any stranger could see would be that of the Russians and Germans, which is much like their life anywhere else; and at balls, dinner parties, and operas, one sees, after all, the merest outside of life. Moreover, September is not the season for society. The magnates were mostly away in the country, and to our vexation we found but few even of those men of letters and science to whom we had brought introductions. Time, however, did not hang heavily on hand. We had various preparations to attend to for our journey into Armenia, preparations which involved constant driving hither and thither through the town, to see people and make purchases. Everybody drives

in Tiflis, down to the very beggars: a Georgian would think himself demeaned by walking more than a few yards while there were vehicles to be had. We had to hunt up an interpreter or courier, an enterprise which proved unexpectedly difficult in this city, which is polyglott, but unorganized, so that, though there may be twenty competent interpreters to be had, it is a mere chance if you hear of any of them. Above all, we had to obtain the requisite official permissions for our journey, letters of commendation and road passports, entitling us to call for horses at the post stations. Without these documents you cannot go a step off the great roads in the Russian dominions, and very awkwardly even along them; nor is the ordinary road passport (what is called a *podorojna*) enough—you must, in order to get on fast, have a crown *podorojna*, which gives special advantages. Fortunately, Russian officials are usually civil and friendly, very official, no doubt, yet less of martinets than Frenchmen or Prussians. Moreover, we had taken the precaution of bringing introductions from high authorities at St. Petersburg, so that every facility was at once offered to us, and, what is more, actually rendered.

When all this had been despatched, there remained he purchases to be made of articles to take back to England. Now purchasing is in the East a very different and much more serious matter than any one ho has not been there can imagine. It is not merely that one must never give anything like the price demanded for an article: that goes without saying. But the process of bargaining must be conducted in a

leisurely and dignified way, must be interrupted by coffee—or rather (in these countries) tea—and conversation, and, indeed, ought never to be concluded at the first sitting or two, but adjourned from time to time for further consideration. Our stay was not long enough to permit all this to be done in due and solemn form; so probably we paid more for the carpets, belts, daggers, and silks which we bought than we ought to have done. But, on the other hand, we had, at least with most of the dealers, the great advantage of being unable to speak their tongue. All the eloquent protestations of the seller came to us only through the reducing medium of a German friend who had kindly undertaken to interpret; whereas our curt and dogged refusals to give more than a certain sum produced their full effect upon him. Thus business went on apace, and down in the cool, dark bazaar we spent only three hours in buying as many carpets; carpets which were fortunate enough to be approved of by connoisseurs among our friends in England.

It was too hot for walks or drives in the outskirts of the city, even had there been anything to see; which there is not, for, once beyond the houses, you are in an utterly bare and dreary land, especially dreary at this season, when the crops have been lifted from the brown soil. There is but one walk which is really worth taking; a short walk which, as a guide-book would say, no traveller ought to omit. The lofty ridge of hills which rises behind Tiflis on the south-west sends down a steep spur to the river, in the form of a long, narrow, rocky ridge, called the Sololaki hill,

whose north side is turned to the town, while its back slopes down to the valley of a small stream called the Tsavkissi. Its bed is dry in summer, what little water there is being drawn off for the botanic garden and the supply of the town. One of the highest and best isolated tops of this ridge is crowned by the ruins of the Persian fortress which dominated the city; broken round and square towers connected by a line of walls, that stand picturesquely up against the sky. On another point are the remains of what local antiquaries pronounce to be a Persian shrine, a temple to the Sun or to Fire, dating from the times of the Sassanid kings, before the crescent of Islam was heard of. One climbs to the top of this ridge through the shady walks of the botanic garden, which lies on the declivity of it away from the town, looking across the dry and desolate glen of the Tsavkissi, on the farther side of which a multitude of tombstones stuck in the ground, unfenced and uncared for, shews where the Persians of Tiflis bury their dead. An ascent which grows steeper when one has left the trees of the garden ends suddenly at a sort of portal in the rocky ridge, and through this one sees all Tiflis lying at one's feet, the Oriental crowd on the bridge, the Russian sentries at the Grand Duke's palace in the Golovinski boulevard, the orchard-embowered houses of the Swabian colony beyond the river, the rush of whose waters one seems to hear amid the mixed hum and stir that rises from the busy streets. Behind are the wooded hills through which the Dariel road descends from the valley of the Aragva, and, still farther, ridge

beyond ridge rising towards the central line of the Caucasus, where the snows of Kazbek glitter over all.

The mass of hills from which this Sololaki height is an offset rises farther to the west into a sort of upland plateau, where lies the pleasant little summer retreat of Kajori, the nearest to Tiflis of all those hill-stations to which its people retire during the heats. We went there—it was the only excursion we had time to make —to present ourselves to the general who was then acting as military adjutant to the Grand Duke Michael (the Lieutenant of the Caucasus), and who was therefore practically commander-in-chief and war minister for the Caucasian provinces.[1] It was a drive of some eight or nine miles; so, in order that we might travel with proper dignity, our hostess procured for us a phaeton, which is the name in Tiflis for a two-horse vehicle, those with one horse being merely droshkies. I may say, in passing, that the Tiflis droshkies are much better than those of St. Petersburg or Moscow, and that there exists a regular tariff of charges, a blessing which the stranger who has spent many precious minutes in bargaining by finger-signs with a St. Petersburg driver over the fare is heartily thankful for. The road winds in a succession of curves up the hills south of the city, and then turns to the west along a gently rising table-land, broken here and there by valleys in which dwarf oaks shelter themselves, but mainly covered by large corn-fields, where teams of

[1] This distinguished officer, one of the ablest and most respected men in the Russian service, is, I believe, now commanding one of the divisions of the Russian army in Bulgaria.

twelve or sixteen oxen were ploughing up the stubble. The air grew fresher and fresher as we mounted out of the oven where Tiflis lies, till in a couple of hours we reached Kajori, where, at 5000 feet above the sea and 3700 feet above Tiflis, we were revelling in a climate like that of the middle slopes of the Alps, keen cool breezes making even the powerful sun enjoyable. There is a good deal of wood about, which adds to the sense of coolness, and away to the south large masses and ranges of mountains, unknown to us, rose up one behind another, parts of the chain which has been called the Anti-Caucasus, and which divides Armenia on the south from Georgia and Imeritia. Eastwards we discovered, among the far-off hills of Daghestan, the snowy peak of Basarjusi (14,722 feet); northward lay the Central Caucasus, with Kazbek conspicuous in the midst, overhanging the depression where the Dariel road crosses into Europe. A more delightful spot to be idle in can hardly be imagined than this grassy upland, with its invigorating breezes and prospects stretching over two hundred miles of forest, dale, and mountain.

The prince Adjutant-General, however, to whom we presented ourselves in his pretty little wooden villa, was not idle. Mounted Cossacks were galloping up with despatches, waiting outside, and galloping off again down the steep road to Tiflis with that air of important haste which the bearer of despatches loves to assume. However, this did not prevent us from receiving a cordial welcome, and enjoying a long and leisurely conversation, resumed after dinner in the

open air, in which our host showed a mastery not only of European politics generally, but even of English party politics and the views and sympathies of our leading statesmen, which few of our own soldiers or diplomatists could have equalled. Remembering that conversation, I understand the temptation which an "interviewer" has to report what an eminent person says to him. But I will resist it.

Kajori is but a small place as yet, though with the growth of Tiflis it is likely to increase, and we visited only one other person there, General Chodzko, the distinguished engineer officer who in 1850 led a surveying party up Ararat. From him and his secretary, Mr. Scharoyan, I received a valuable suggestion for the climb, which we were thinking of trying, viz. to keep to the rocks rather than trust the snow, and many injunctions on no account to ascend alone. In the evening we returned to Tiflis, fortified with all the recommendations that could be desired to convey us along the road into Armenia, for which, on the next day but one, we started accordingly.

I seem to have given in these few pages but a meagre account of the sights of the Transcaucasian capital, wanting both in the practical precision of Baedeker and the wealth of illustrative learning and disquisition and quotation which is the glory of our great English series of guide-books. Even the picturesque side of the place suffers in the hands of a traveller who must own that he has no eye for costume. My excuse is that in Tiflis it is not the particular things to be seen in the city that impress

themselves on one's memory: it is the city itself, the strange mixture of so many races, tongues, religions, customs. Its character lies in the fact that it has no one character, but ever so many different ones. Here all these peoples live side by side, buying and selling, and working for hire, yet never coming into any closer union, remaining indifferent to one another, with neither love, nor hate, nor ambition, peaceably obeying a government of strangers who conquered them without resistance and retain them without effort, and held together by no bond but its existence. Of national life, or municipal life, there is not the first faint glimmering: indeed, the aboriginal people of the country seem scarcely less strangers in its streets than do all the other races that tread them. It is hard to say what the future has in store for such a town; meantime it prospers, delivered for ever from the fear of Persian devastation, and, in spite of bran-new boulevards and stuccoed shop-fronts, it is wonderfully picturesque.

CHAPTER V.

THROUGH ARMENIA TO ARARAT.

IN this chapter I propose to give some account of the route which leads from Tiflis through Armenia to the foot of Ararat and the borders of Persia, and of the ancient city of Erivan, the capital of a Russian government (= province) of the same name. Let me premise that the term "Russian Armenia," which it is often convenient to use, does not denote any political division. Armenia is merely a popular historical name for the countries which at one time or another formed part of the old Armenian kingdom.

On the 6th of September my companion and I rattled out of Tiflis in a comfortable tarantass, threading our way with difficulty for the first mile or two through the crowd of carts, pack-horses, and sometimes strings of camels which were entering the city laden with merchandise. Perhaps, however, I ought to say what a tarantass is. Two kinds of vehicle are used here, as in the Russian empire generally, for the conveyance of passengers—the *telega* and the *tarantass*. A telega is simply a small four-wheeled square or oblong cart, usually with sides, which give it the air of a box upon wheels, but some-

times without sides, a mere flat piece of board, on the edge of which you sit, letting your legs dangle over. Of its capacities, or incapacities, for comfort, I shall speak later on. The tarantass is in shape more like a large Norwegian carriole, but with four wheels: it is a seat, placed in the centre of a longish pole, which again is set on the axles of the wheels. This gives it a sort of elasticity; in fact, the pole acts as a spring, just as in the American vehicle called a buckboard. It holds three persons, one beside the driver, and two on the seat proper, and is sometimes made with a hood to come up behind, which gives shelter in winter-time. There is just enough space in front of the sitter's knees to hold some light luggage, with a little box under the seat where you can stow away bread, tea, and grapes, the supplies with which we had started. Our tarantass, lent by a kind friend at Tiflis, had no hood, but in summer, and for a comparatively short journey, where there was no occasion to sleep much, this was no loss; and otherwise it was satisfactory, and went as smoothly as tarantasses ever do. From the terrible sun one could get some protection by a white umbrella and dark spectacles, but the dust was less resistable; it penetrated everywhere, even to the middle of our loaf of bread. Under any other circumstances, life in such dust would have been a burden. However, we had just escaped from the furnace of Tiflis into the clear, dry, exhilarating air of the steppe; we were going ahead into a really curious and seldom visited country—a country of which we had all our lives known the name, and

little beyond the name; and we were in excellent health. So that even greater annoyances than this would have been willingly faced.

There is something startling, at least to a traveller fresh from Europe, in the suddenness with which, on emerging from a great Eastern city, one finds oneself in a wilderness. Here the country was already desolate steppe, just like that which lies north of the Caucasus between the Euxine and Caspian seas. However, I had better explain what the Russians mean by the term *steppe*, which is one of those a traveller comes to use so familiarly as to forget that it is not ordinary English. The steppe is not necessarily flat land, for the country north of the Sea of Azof, for instance, is rolling; nor low country, for some of the so-called steppes beyond the Caspian are on lofty table-lands. Nor is it barren; on the contrary, some parts are extremely fertile. It is simply open, treeless land, whether covered with grass, or with weeds, or with dwarf, thorny bushes, or only with stones and sand. Sometimes the soil is a rich loam, ready to produce magnificent harvests, and such is most of the Black Sea and Azof steppe; sometimes it is so thoroughly impregnated with salt, as in the part which lies round the west-north-western bay of the Caspian, as to be useless for agricultural purposes; sometimes, again, it is blank, downright desert, as useless as the sands of Sahara, or the stony deserts of Iceland. Which character it bears depends chiefly on the nature of the subsoil. If this is porous, sand or rock, for instance, the little

rain that falls drains off at once, and the surface is condemned in these intensely dry countries to perpetual sterility. Here, in the valleys of the Kur and Aras, there is but little of the pure desert steppe, though the rainfall sinks sometimes to four or five inches a year; but on the other side of the Caspian, in the plateau of Ust Urt and the parts of Turkestan that lie south of the Aral Sea, desert is the rule, and a bit of cultivable land, with a spring or pond, the rare exception. Along the road we were traversing the steppe land is comparatively narrow. On the north one sees a long line of low wooded hills, outliers of and hiding the great range of the Eastern Caucasus in Daghestan; to the south-west other hills, bare, brown, and lumpy, rise up towards the edge of the Armenian plateaux, in whose recesses the patient industry of German colonists has here and there created, under sheltering woods, a little paradise of orchards. In the middle, between the two lines of hill, which lie some twenty or thirty miles apart, flows the Kur, in a wide, shallow valley, its banks fringed by willows and by gardens, irrigated from the stream by water-wheels. With a little more irrigation, the whole plain might shake with harvests, for now and then one finds a stream descending from the hills, the waters of which could be led in rills over this thirsty soil. At present there are no inhabitants to attempt this. Once in six or seven miles we pass a Tatar burying-ground, a dismal group of stones stuck erect, though most have now fallen over, in the bare steppe, with no enclosure round them nor any sign of care. Not far from the cemetery you

discover, with some difficulty, groups of low, round-topped, earthen hovels, some like an English pigsty, some mere burrows in the clay, with no windows, and only a hole for a door. There is no wood close at hand, and the people are too idle or too poor to fetch it from a distance; besides which I suppose they prefer the troglodyte style of house for the sake of warmth. These huts are all deserted; the Tatars who inhabit them during winter have now driven their flocks up into the hills on the Armenian border to seek fresh pasture, and will not return till the approach of winter. One is puzzled to know how people so poor manage to live at all; probably the explanation is that they can live upon infinitely little, far less than a Western labourer needs. For the matter of that, they do not labour, but simply idle, though their countrymen in towns like Tiflis do and can work hard. Besides, they spend their time pretty much in the open air; and the race may perhaps have grown accustomed to abstinence by long ages of it. Silent and dreary as the steppe is, there is plenty of traffic along the road: strings of carts laden with merchandise, vehicles with merchants or officials, solitary riders, all armed to the teeth, with two or three daggers, and perhaps pistols also, stuck in their belt, and an extraordinary old gun of the matchlock type slung over their shoulder. At first we bowed or touched our hats to these wayfarers, whereat they seemed surprised, and did not return the compliment. Our companion solemnly warned us to salute no more, saying we should be taken for strangers ignorant of the ways of the country, and likely to be rich men;

and that even if none of those we met were thievishly inclined, they might say something about us—probably a disagreeable something—to other people along the road who would be ready for mischief. In fact, the presumption here seems to be *omnis ignotus pro periculoso*; and instead of civility you do well to scowl at those you meet, and let them see that you too are armed.

This piece of country between Tiflis and Erivan is said to be the chief seat of Transcaucasian brigandage, and many are the tales one hears about it. Some, which have a slightly romantic, Robin Hood sort of flavour, I have given in an earlier chapter: I will add two others which may be more historical. Not long ago a band of less than a dozen mounted robbers seized some merchants travelling along this road, disarmed them, bound them, and led them into a hollow among the hills. There they left them under the guard of two of the band, and returned to a spot near the road, where they seized one party after another of wayfarers, and carried them, similarly bound and disarmed, into the same hollow, till at last more than fifty were collected. Then they proceeded to search and rob all this crowd of victims, and dismissed them, unarmed but unhurt. Only two or three years ago, the governor of Erivan, who had been making efforts to clear his government of these plagues, was encountered on a journey by a troop of fully fifty brigands. Their leader rode forward, and pointed out to his Excellency that the escort of twenty Cossacks who accompanied him need not attempt to resist the superior numbers of the band. The governor admitted the justice of

this view, and surrendered, upon which they took from him his favourite horse, and sent him on his way lamenting. A few weeks later, the horse was returned, with a message from the chief that he had no wish to injure the governor, and desired that nothing should interrupt their friendly relations. "I took your horse only as a lesson to you not to interfere with my people as you have lately been doing: see that you do not repeat that mistake."[1]

The discourses on brigandage wherewith, like Bunyan's pilgrims, we beguiled the way received some point from our arriving, just as the shades of evening were beginning to fall, at the Red Bridge, the most favourite haunt of robbers on the whole road. Here, some twenty-five miles from Tiflis, a considerable stream comes down from the Armenian mountains on the right to join the Kur, and winds along the precipitous face of some low, bare hills that bound its valley on the south. In among these hills there are admirable lurking-places, whence the robbers can pounce out on you at a moment's notice when their scout has seen you crossing the bridge, and in whose recesses they could easily evade the pursuit of the Cossacks or the *tchapars* (= gallopers) who are now stationed at the north end of the bridge, where some of its dry, slightly pointed arches have been turned into dwellings. These tchapars are a sort of local police or militia, composed

[1] I give this story for what it is worth, having been unable to ascertain what foundation there is for it. A high Russian official to whom I mentioned it pooh-poohed it altogether (as, indeed, he could hardly have helped doing); another well-informed semi-official friend afterwards assured me that it was perfectly true.

not generally of Cossacks, but of the natives of the district, Georgians, Tatars, or Armenians, as the case may be, and about here probably Tatars. They are supposed to scour the country, and act as escorts to travellers whom the administration specially desires to protect. Unless rumour does them great injustice, they are often in league with the thieves; and if not, they are so sure to ride off at the first shot that one loses nothing (except a sense of dignity) by their absence. Along the road, at intervals of a few miles in the more hilly parts, there are placed little wooden scaffoldings, some fifteen feet high, with a ladder giving access to a small platform, where a tchapar or Cossack is set to keep a look-out over the adjoining slopes, and summon his comrades from the nearest station if he sees any suspicious characters about. We saw nobody aloft in any of these look-outs as we passed, and supposed from this, and from what people told us at the Red Bridge, that the road was safe at present. However, at the next station, which we reached about 9 o'clock P.M., the air was full of stories of "bad people," Tatars, of course, who had been seen hanging about; and we were besought not to go on by a pompous postmaster, who warned us that, as we were recommended to his care by the government, we owed it to him to be prudent, and that he would not be answerable for the results if we proceeded further that night. Whether there was really any risk, it was impossible for us to tell, but, anyhow, it was clear that there would be considerable difficulty in getting horses;

so on our companion's advice we halted till about 4 A.M., "making ourselves comfortable" in the one room which the post-house provided. This process consisted in spreading out on the dirty floor a small Shemakha rug which we had bought in Tiflis, and lying down upon it with a pair of boots for a pillow. As the floor was hard as well as dirty, and the room full of other travellers, who went to and fro, and would not suffer the window to remain open, it may be imagined that we rose little refreshed to continue our journey, and appreciated less than we ought to have done the splendour of the sunrise that broke over the far-off mountains of Daghestan, and lit up with a momentary glow the brown wastes of the steppe and the desolate hills that enclose it. At the next station but one (Akstafinsk), milk and eggs proved to be obtainable; so here we halted for breakfast, and bade farewell to the Kur, whose course towards the Caspian could be traced far down through the widening plain by a winding line of green willows, poplars, and brushwood of various kinds fringing its marshy banks, and harbouring fevers and wild boars. Our road turned sharp to the west, up the valley of the Akstafa river, which, as we neared the hills, grew verdant and cheerful, fields of maize alternating with thickets, while the wild vine climbed among the oaks and planes, and cottages raised above the ground replaced the Tatar burrows. Still further up, the valley becomes a deep and narrow glen between bold mountains, sometimes of limestone, sometimes of schist, with masses of columnar basalt and porphyry interjected. At one

point they come down to the river, and form a striking gorge. Nothing could be prettier, or less like the country we had just left. Bare reddish mountain tops rose nearly 4000 feet above us, and 6000 or 7000 feet above the sea; their densely wooded sides descending steeply into the valley, along whose narrow but level floor the clear stream rippled along in little runs and pools, where surely trout must play, the sunlight breaking through the bushes on its sparkling shallows. We might have fancied ourselves in the Jura but for the intense dryness of the hillsides and the paucity of life and cultivation; for there was but one small village in the twenty miles between Akstafinsk and Delijan, a little town high up among the hills, 4200 feet above the sea, where we were forced to halt some hours to repair the damaged wheels of our tarantass.

Delijan, to which some of the wealthier residents in Tiflis retire during the summer heats, is not only an exquisitely pretty spot, but of some consequence in a military point of view, for here the main road to Erivan, which we were following, is joined by a road which runs west through the mountains, north of the great mass of Ala Göz, to the fortress of Alexandropol, or Gumri, on the Turkish frontier, the principal stronghold of Russia in these regions, where a large force is always kept on foot, and the autumn manœuvres usually take place. This second road is now of great military importance to the Russians, who have sent along it most of their troops operating against the Turks in Armenia; so it is the more sur-

prising that it should be unfinished in parts. Either they did not intend to fight Turkey so soon or they have been strangely remiss. Delijan itself, which lies scattered up and down the steep hillside, at a point where two glens meet, is inhabited partly by Armenians, partly by Molokans, a sect of Russian Dissenters who have been deported hither by the Czars. Though a Transcaucasian German whose acquaintance we had made gave a bad account of them, declaring they were "nearly as bad as the Armenians, full of deceit, making a great pretence of religion, but using it as a cloak for treachery and greed," I believe that they are really a good sort of people, steady and industrious, something like the Shakers of America, or what our own Quakers may have been in their first days, though, no doubt, far less intelligent and more superstitious. They are said to have neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper, nor any regular clergy; and at their religious meetings follow up the singing and the extempore prayers which constitute the service with an odd sort of dance and kissings all round. They cling to all their old Russian habits, marry only among themselves, and build their cottages of wood, so that one easily distinguishes their settlements from those of Armenians or Tatars, even before seeing their beards and characteristically Russian physiognomy. It is a pity there are not more of them in the country.

From Delijan, which we left at seven o'clock in the evening, the well engineered road mounts steeply through a superbly wooded glen, whose beauties,

however, we lost in the darkness. It was midnight before we reached the post-house at the top of the pass, where we halted in the hope of a little sleep, having had none to speak of the night before. Sleep, however, was out of the question. It was bitterly cold, for we were at a height of 7000 feet above the sea, the room was small, and foul beyond description, and the stony floor one had to lie down upon swarmed—here, however, let a veil be dropped. Memory called up many disagreeable nights—nights in rock-holes on the Alps, nights under canvas amid Icelandic snow-storms, nights in Transylvanian forests, nights in coasting steamers off the shores of Spain, nights in railway waiting-rooms in England, but no night so horrible as this. Descending under the opening eyelids of the dawn from the pass, which lies among green and rounded hills, we were refreshed by the sight of a magnificent inland sea stretching away fifty miles to the southward, surrounded by high volcanic hills, all absolutely bare of trees, and in most places even of grass, but with a few small patches of snow lying here and there in their upper hollows.[1] It was the lake which the Russians call Goktcha (a corruption of the Tatar name, which means blue lake), and the natives Sevan, the Lychnitis of the ancients; and we were now fairly in Armenia. Unlike the two other great lakes of that country, that of Van in the Turkish dominions and that of Urumia in the Persian, its waters are fresh,

[1] The top of the pass is 7124 feet above the sea. A little bit of the summit of Ararat is said to be visible; we, however, did not see it.

and it discharges by a small river, the Zenga, into the Aras. Of the various legends relating to it, one is as old as the time of Marco Polo,[1] viz. that no fish are found in it during the whole winter till the first day in Lent, when, for the benefit of the faithful, who in the Eastern world observe the fasts of the Church more rigorously than any other of her ordinances, they appear in immense numbers, and continue till Easter Sunday. The mountains round it are all of volcanic origin, and rise some 4000 to 5000 feet above its surface, which is over 5870 feet above the sea. Great part of it freezes in winter. The beach, at the place where I bathed, was composed of large volcanic pebbles, glued together by and incrusted with a thick calcareous deposit, which forms all around the shores a white line, marking the difference between the summer and winter level of the water. Grand and solemn as the view over it was, there was something so dreary in these stern, dark brown mountains, and long lines of shore, unrelieved by a tree or a spot of cultivation, that one could understand why the people of Tiflis prefer the woody hollows of Delijan or Borjom to a place otherwise so well fitted to become a health-giving mountain retreat. The only village we could descry lies just opposite the only island, whereon is the ancient and famous Armenian monastery of Sevan or Sevanga. Here a great fishery is carried on, and, I grieve to say, at other times as well as during Lent; in fact, Tiflis gets most of its fish from the lake, which is a hundred miles nearer to it than is the

[1] See the fifth chapter of the second part.

Caspian. Even the Armenian fathers of the little monastery in the lake, which at one time claimed to be the seat of the Patriarch of the Armenian Church, own with a sigh that the age of miracles is past.

Passing by the Molokan settlement of Elenovka, situate at the point where the river issues from a shallow arm of the lake, we came to another station, where it was necessary to quit the post-road in order to present ourselves to the vice-governor of Erivan, who was then residing at a mountain nook called Daratchitchak, the Simla of Erivan, whither its upper classes escape from the frightful heats of the Araxes plain, and whose name is interpreted to mean Valley of Flowers." It is a drive of about eight miles up a steep and rocky road into this pleasant little recess among the hills, on whose higher slopes the yellow corn had not yet been reaped, for they are full 7000 feet above the sea-level. Hamlets lie scattered in the glens, and here and there woods of dwarf oak hang on the steep sides of the glens, giving the landscape a softer and more cheerful look than this part of Armenia generally has. At the top of the long, steep slope down which the village of Daratchitchak meanders stand three curious old churches, built of huge blocks of a reddish volcanic stone, the masonry exquisitely finished, as it usually is in the ancient ecclesiastical edifices. The two larger of them have been partly destroyed in some of the numerous Tatar irruptions; but the smallest is entire, covered, like all Armenian churches, by a high polygonal cupola, and has a pretty little portico, whose doorway is divided

into two by a miniature, elegantly carved, Romanesque column, supporting two slightly pointed arches, a charming piece of work, which reminded us of Western forms more than anything we had yet seen in these countries. It is said to have been built by a Mohammedan who had been converted to Christianity by listening, as he stood outside, to the sweet music of the mass, a legend which becomes credible only if it be supposed that Armenian church music has greatly degenerated during the last few centuries. He who listens to-day to its plain song will experience very different impressions from those attributed to the musical Muslim.

We were courteously welcomed by the vice-governor and his wife, a lady from St. Petersburg, and received from him a batch of letters commending us to various authorities further on. He smiled when we asked, through the lady, who acted as interpreter, about Ararat, told us that it had never been really ascended, though several travellers professed to have got up, and evidently thought the enterprise hopeless. After dinner we regained the post-road, and, when fresh horses had been obtained, drove on between two tremendous thunderstorms, the one shrouding the mountains round the Goktcha lake towards the east, the other hanging over the huge mass of Ala Göz, which now came into view on our west. This mountain consists of three sharp, rocky peaks, apparently parts of the rim of an ancient crater, rising out of an immense swelling upland some forty miles in circumference. The peaks, one of which is said to be inac-

cessible, and certainly looks as though it might afford nice bits of climbing, are too abrupt to bear snow, but we afterwards saw patches of white in the bottom of the extinct crater between them. It is even said that there is a small glacier there; I cannot think, however, the snow is sufficient in quantity to feed one. Ala Göz is a curious instance of the untrustworthiness of one's impressions about the height of mountains. After Ararat, it is the loftiest summit between the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf, 13,436 feet above the sea, as high as the Schreckhorn or Piz Bernina. If we had judged by our eyes, we should have put it down at 9000 feet. I have never seen so high a hill look so inconsiderable, so perfectly mean and trivial. It is true that the point whence we first caught sight of it was 5000 feet above the sea; but afterwards, looking at it from the plain of the Aras, and from the top of Ararat, it seemed no higher, owing, no doubt, to the gentleness of its lower slopes and to the way one miscalculates distance in this clear, dry atmosphere.

The rolling plateau which we were traversing is mostly cultivated, partly by Armenians, partly by Russian Molokans, and in a few places by emigrants belonging to the Finnish tribe of Mordvins, who were transplanted hither from the Middle Volga at their own wish, and are said to be well satisfied with the change. At one village where we stopped to change horses, it was easy to recognise the peculiar Finnish physiognomy, broad and smooth faces, long eyes, a rather flattish nose. The harvest had just been got in,

and at every village the corn was being trodden out by bullocks (unmuzzled, we were glad to see), who are driven round and round on the hard earthen threshing-floor, dragging a piece of wood the bottom of which is studded with bits of iron or hard stone, and on the top of which the driver, usually a woman, stands. It is a bare and dreary country, like all the interior of Armenia, perfectly brown, and apparently almost waterless; but the volcanic soil is very rich, and would support a population far larger than that which now occupies it. Everything is primitive to the last degree: there was not even a morsel of food, nor a drop of *vodka* (the common Russian spirit), to be had at the post-station, where hunger forced us to stop for a sort of meal at 10 P.M.; and we supported life entirely upon a huge lump of bread which we had brought with us from Tiflis, and hard-boiled eggs, which we had managed to pick up at one of the more sumptuous stations some way back. Fortunately tea was obtainable, even in this abode of famine, and tea had become a solace and support which the traveller in more favoured regions can hardly understand. You can always have it, and that promptly, if you carry, as everybody does, the raw material about with you. Every post-house, however simple, possesses a *samovar*, a huge brazen urn with a cylinder in the middle, into which hot charcoal is put to boil the water. As soon as you enter the station, you call for the samovar; in fifteen or twenty minutes the hot water is ready. Then you put in the tea, slice down the lemons, and tumble in the sugar, which articles you have, of course, brought

with you, and in five minutes all your wretchedness is forgotten. One soon acquires, and on returning to England is loth to relinquish, the two characteristic Russian habits, of pouring out the tea the moment it has been made, without letting it stand to grow stronger by brewing, or "masking," as they say in Scotland, and of drinking tumbler after tumbler of it. (It is always taken by the Russians in glasses, not cups, and with incredibly large quantities of sugar.) Of course it is weak, but then it does your nerves no harm, and the flavour is usually so much finer than that of English tea that one cares little about the strength. Tea is the universal beverage of these countries, just as coffee is of the Levant and the Mediterranean generally; it is drunk by Armenians, Persians, Tatars, Turkmans, Kalmucks, Mongols, Tibetans, in fact, by the whole of Northern and Central Asia, all the way to China, just as much as by the Russians themselves. Of course, the kinds which the poor, and the nomad races, consume are very coarse. These commoner kinds come across Siberia or the desert in flat cakes or bricks—cakes so hard as to need a strong knife or hatchet to cut them; and in some parts they pound it up and drink it with butter and salt.

The last part of this third day's journey to Erivan was performed in the dark. The thunder-clouds had rolled away, and the moon appeared, a waning moon that feebly lit up the bleak landscape. At last, as we topped a hill, something like a faint white cloud appeared in the southern sky. "Look there," said one

of us, rousing his nodding companion; "do you see that, the white thing yonder? high up? Do you know what that is?"—"No," said the other, sleepily; "what is it?" To which the first whispered in answer, "That is Ararat." Then we both dropped asleep again, at imminent peril to me on the box-seat of falling off, and were only awakened by the unutterable jolting of the vehicle over the masses of loose volcanic rock which form the principal street of Erivan. It was no easy matter to find quarters, for the only inn was not only shut up at 2 A.M. (the hour when we arrived), but had closed itself altogether and ceased to receive guests. Nothing but the argument which overcame the unjust judge induced its people, when all the dogs in the city had been roused by our knockings, to open their courtyard door, and let us sleep the sleep of utter weariness upon an ancient sofa and a dismantled bedstead.

Erivan,[1] the capital of Russian Armenia, which next morning stood basking in a sun that made it dangerous to go out except under an umbrella, is a thoroughly Eastern town, with just a little Russian varnish in one or two of its streets. It is Eastern of the Persian type, which is very different from the Arab Orientalism of Cairo or Tangier, or the half French, half Osmanli Orientalism of Stamboul. Lying in a hollow at the foot of the plateau which extends northwards towards the Goktcha lake, yet a little above

[1] Pronounced almost 'Yeryevan.' The stress of the voice is on the last syllable, as in Tiflis (Teeflees), Etchmiadzin, Tavriz, and most of these names.

the level of the Aras plain to the south, it covers with its 30,000 people an area nearly as large as that of Brussels or Sheffield. The streets are wide, the houses, except a few modern Russian ones, of one story only, built of clay or plastered brick, round an open court-yard, with no windows towards the street. Many of them, especially in the outskirts, open off narrow lanes between high mud walls, and are surrounded by groves and vineyards. There are no shops, for all the buying and selling goes on in the bazaar, a complex of long straight brick arcades, in which the dealers and handicraftsmen sit upon divans behind their wares, sipping tea, or smoking out of their *kalians*, or long flexible water pipes, and scarcely condescend to answer you when you ask the price of an article. Each trade has an arcade or two to itself; the bakers are in one, the fruit-sellers in a second, the shoemakers in a third; in a fourth, carpets; in a fifth, leather goods, and so forth. Persians, Tatars, and Armenians are all represented, the last being decidedly more anxious to do business than the other two. The bazaar begins to be crowded about 5 A.M., and thins off in the forenoon, reviving a little in the quarters where food is sold towards the time of the evening meal. In front of it lies the great *Meidan*, a sort of square or open space, where the road to Persia meets the road to Tiflis and Europe. Standing here at 6 A.M., when the bazaar is at its height, one sees the life of an Eastern town in its picturesque simplicity. The busy parti-coloured crowd is vibrating in and out of the mouths of these arcades; men in

sheepskin hats, shuffling along in their loose, low-heeled slippers, and women covered from head to foot with a blue checked robe, are flocking hither to buy food from every part of the city, and clustering like bees round the stalls which bakers and fruit-sellers have set up here and there through the *Meidan*, and where heaps of huge green and golden melons, plums, apples, and, above all, grapes of the richest hue and flavour, lie piled up. Hard by stand the rude country carts or pack-horses that have brought the fruit, with the Armenian peasant in his loose grey cotton frock; while strings of camels from Persia or the Caspian coast file in, led by sturdy Tatars, daggers stuck in their belts, an old matchlock slung behind, and a huge sheepskin cap overshadowing the whole body. Sometimes a swarthy, fierce-eyed Kurd from the mountains appears; sometimes a slim and stealthy son of Iran, with his tall black hat and yellow robe. It is a perfectly Eastern scene, just such as any city beyond the frontiers would present, save that in Persia one would see men crucified along the wall, and both there and in Turkey might hear the shrieks of wretches writhing under the bastinado. One forgets Russia till a mounted Cossack is seen galloping past with despatches for Alexandropol, where the Grand Duke, attended by the governor of Erivan, is now holding a great review. It is just such a scene as Ararat, whose snowy cone rises behind in incomparable majesty, may have looked down upon any day for these three thousand years. As noon approaches, the babbling rills of life that flow hither and thither in the bazaar are stilled;

the heat has sent every one home to slumber, or at least to rest and shade; the fruit-sellers have moved their stalls, the peasants have returned to the country; Ararat, too, has hid his silvery head in a mantle of clouds. Only the impatient Western traveller braves the arrows of the sun, and tries to worry his Armenian driver into a start across the scorching plain.

The population of Erivan is greatly mixed, and, of course, no one knows the proportions of the various elements. Till 1827, when Paskievitch captured it, and won for himself the title of Erivanski, it belonged to Persia, and a good many Persians still remain in it, fully a quarter of the whole number of inhabitants. Nearly as many more may be Tatars, less than a half Armenians; the balance consists of Russian officials and troops, with a few Greeks and other nondescript foreigners, including, of course, several Germans. Go where you will in the world, as a friend said to me who has traversed nearly every part of it, you will always find a German; they are more ubiquitous than the English themselves. Although it is the capital of a government which includes nearly all Russian Armenia, it is a stagnant sort of place, with little trade and hardly any manufactures. Life flows on in the old channels, little affected either by Russian conquests or by the reviving hopes of the Armenian nation. Like most towns in a country which has been so often the theatre of destructive wars, it has few antiquities, though it claims to have been founded by Noah, and appeals to its name, which in Armenian is said to mean "the Apparent," as evi-

dence that it was the first dry land the patriarch saw. Another tradition goes still further back, holding that it was Noah's dwelling before the Flood took place. Be this as it may, it has now no sights to show except the mosques and the ancient palace of the Shah, or rather of his lieutenant, the Sardar of Erivan. This palace is included within the citadel, a Persian fortress, strong by its situation on the top of a basaltic cliff, which rises over the river Zenga; strong also, according to Asiatic ideas, in its high brick walls running along the top of the cliff, though I do not suppose they could resist modern artillery for a day. Part of the fortress is now occupied by barracks, part is in ruins, but two or three chambers have been carefully kept up, and even to some extent restored in genuine Persian style, and give one a lively idea of the architectural style and taste of the only Eastern nation among which art can still be said to live, if indeed it lives even there. The roof, as well as the floors inside, are covered with bright blue, green, or yellow tiles, the older ones of which—you may pick them anywhere out of the ruins—are wonderfully vivid in colour. The walls and ceiling of the principal chamber, which is supposed to have been the audience chamber of the Sardar, are decorated with a profusion of small mirrors, or rather pieces of looking-glass, stuck together in a kind of mosaic, arranged alternately with paintings in excessively bright colours, representing the Shah chasing the lion and the stag, together with various emblematic devices, and patterns of roses and other flowers and shrubs, repeated all round. A

sort of stalactite ornament in coloured plaster is in a style similar to that of the ceilings in the Alhambra; indeed, it has been supposed that some of the work there bears traces of a Persian hand. The drawing is stiff and conventional; and though the tints are well harmonized, they are almost too bright; the effect is rather gaudy than gorgeous. One is glad to refresh the sated eye by looking through the one window which opens to the south upon the stream foaming down its rocky bed below, the women washing clothes along its banks, Tatar carriers driving their teams over the bridge, and beyond it the well-watered banks of the Aras, an oasis of delicious green in this parched and dusty land, with the two cloud-girt peaks of Ararat rising five-and-thirty miles beyond.

The principal mosque lies behind the bazaar in a maze of lanes separated by gardens and courtyards. It forms one side of a square enclosure planted with orange and other trees, with a tank in the middle, over which four tall elm trees bend, the whole not unlike in arrangement to, although smaller than, the famous garden of that masterpiece of Mohammedan art, the mosque at Cordova. Here, however, the mosque itself, so far from being a vast and complicated structure is more like what would be called in Italy a *loggia*, open on one side to the garden, with a deep and lofty horseshoe-shaped recess (the mosque proper), much like a large round apse, or the half of a dome, in the middle of this gallery, part of the interior of which is covered with handsome tiles, and adorned with texts from the Koran. The floor is bare and

open; there is, however, a small wooden pulpit, whence the officiating mollahs read or preach. A little way from the dome that surmounts the mosque, an elegant minaret rises, round and decorated with coloured tiles, like those of Turkey and Morocco, whereas at Cordova and Seville the minaret is a square brick tower. The rest of the gallery which surrounds the enclosure is appropriated to the mollahs attached to the mosque, or made to furnish resting-places for pilgrims, or school-rooms where boys are taught to read the Koran. This mosque belongs to the Muslims of the Shiah persuasion, that which prevails in Persia; and here they come to worship all day long, bowing and prostrating themselves towards the centre of the apse, which is of course in the direction of Mecca. Its ample proportions, the rich yet soft colours of its walls, the silence, the shade, the rustling of the boughs and murmuring of water in the adjoining garden, make it one of the most beautiful and impressive houses of prayer that I have ever seen.

In the same part of the town, not far from the bazaar, are placed most of the caravan-serais, as well as the baths. An Eastern bath has been so often described that he would be a bold traveller who should attempt to describe it again, though here in Persia it is not quite the same thing as in Constantinople or London. The *caravan-serai* (bower or resting-place of the caravan) is very unlike an inn according to our notions. It is a round or elliptical enclosure between high walls with a strong gate or gates to it. Round the inner wall runs a sort

of gallery, roofed, but open to the air, where the traveller encamps with his cart or camels, providing himself from the market with bread and wine, foddering his beasts himself, and getting nothing from the innkeeper except space, a sort of shelter, and protection against nocturnal thieves. Till lately there was a European inn of some pretensions in the city, but its landlord, according to the story told us, had some months before been thrown into prison on a charge of murdering one of his guests, a Greek banker, whose imprudent display of money had roused his cupidity, and the hotel was therefore closed. The cries and groans of the victim, whose throat was being cut, had been heard by various people in the house, none of whom stirred to help him. Nobody doubted the innkeeper's guilt, but justice moves slowly in these countries, and he may not have been tried, much less executed, even now. The inn in which we stayed had, as I have mentioned, also been closed, and when we returned to Erivan from a journey to Etchmiadzin, it refused to admit us, till compelled to do so by the police authorities. Having been recommended by the vice-governor to their attentions, we thought it would be a pity to make no use of them, and accordingly by their means forced an entrance and got a night's shelter.

The most trivial details of Eastern life are fascinating to those whose childish imagination has been fed by the Bible and the Arabian Nights. To see people sitting or sleeping on the flat roofs, or talking to one another in the gate through which a string of camels

is passing, to visit mosques and minarets and bazaars, watch the beggar crawl into the ruined tomb of a Muslim saint, and ramble through a grove of cypresses strewn with nameless, half fallen gravestones, to stand by the baker or the shoemaker as he plies his craft in his open stall, and listen to the stories told by the barber, even when one does not understand a word, with the sacred mountain of the Ark looking down upon all, this seems like a delightful dream from far-off years, and one wakes with a start to perceive that it is all real, and that in the midst of it stands an unsympathetic Frank, unable to rid himself of a sense of mingled contempt and pity for the "natives," anxious to examine what he has come so far to see, and then press on to something further. One considers how long it would take to tame down a restless Western spirit to the apathy, the acquiesciveness, the sense of boundless time before and around which these people have been steeped in for so many generations. Nevertheless, the light of common day does not wholly disenchant the East. True it is that every-day life here must be unspeakably dull, duller than in the quietest provincial town of France or England. For romance, in the novelist's sense of the word, there is infinitely less opportunity than among ourselves. The great movements of the European world seem much farther away than they had seemed to me six years before in America; for the inhabitants, even those of the better class, had not the smallest interest in them. Even of the approaching rupture with Turkey, which was to bring war into this very plain, and of the forces

that were urging it on, no one (so far as we could ascertain) knew anything, or had any means of knowing, except what might be given in some stray Russian newspaper, brought here weeks after it had appeared. Nevertheless, in spite of, perhaps indeed because of, all this stillness and sameness, this want of literature and discussion and news, the East retains its power of fascination. Setting aside the view of Ararat, and one or two picturesque bits like the bazaar and the mosque garden I have described, Erivan is not beautiful. Its streets, not only the three new Russian ones, but those that date from Persian times, are dull or ugly with their long blank walls of brick or baked clay, unbroken by a window, or a gable, or a shop. They are as colourless as Bolton or Wolverhampton, and not one-tenth so animated, for a vehicle is rarely seen, and a foot passenger not often; the women steal along silent and shrouded. But not only are there here under one's eyes all those externals of Oriental life to which literature, legend, and history, from the book of Genesis downwards, have attached so much romance; there is also a deep impression received from the sight of a society so unlike our own, a society which has preserved that very old-world character which seemed old-world even to the Greeks more than two thousand years ago, a society immovable in its beliefs, ideas, usages, with its fundamental conceptions so different from our own that one hardly sees how it is ever to be carried along in the general stream of the world's development, and hardly wishes that it should.

With the end of our pilgrimage full in sight, and the moon, on whose light we must depend for night marches, waning fast, we had no wish to linger in Erivan, especially as the letters we bore enabled us to get horses without trouble or delay. Both in Tiflis and all the way along from Tiflis to Erivan, we had enquired about Mount Ararat, the side from which to approach it, the modes or chances of ascending it. Little, however, could be learnt except that the point we must make for was the frontier military station of Aralykh, lying on the right (western) bank of the Araxes,[1] about twenty-five miles from Erivan. It was to the colonel commanding a detachment of Cossacks at this point that our letters of recommendation from the Russian authorities were addressed. So far, then, our course was clear. Whatever might happen afterwards, whatever difficulties man or nature might oppose to the ascent of the mountain, we must make for Aralykh. Accordingly, on the morning of September the 9th, we drove off from Erivan under the blazing noon, having purchased and stowed away in the tarantass a good stock of bread, tea, and delicious grapes, grapes well worthy to have grown on Noah's vine. The road combined in a singular manner two apparently incompatible evils, roughness and softness. It was strewn with rocks, over which we jolted with a violence that obliged one to hold on for fear of being thrown out; it was deep in dust, which rose

[1] Aras is, I believe, the Persian form of the name, Arax the Russian; but it is quite as well known under the ancient name Araxes, which is at least as old as Herodotus. He, however, confounds our river with the Volga and the Oxus.

round us in blinding clouds. The hilly ground was mostly steppe, unoccupied waste, which is doubtless browsed on by Tatar flocks in spring, but in September was grey stony soil, covered with withered weeds. Cultivation did not appear till we began to approach the Araxes, where not only is the soil deeper, but tiny canals from the river or the few tributary streams which it receives from the left diffuse fertility.

This Araxes plain is much the richest part of Armenia, being both hot and well watered, while the rest of the country is high, cold, and dry. It is, in fact, a country of lofty open plateaux separated by ranges of bare mountains; the plateaux 5000 to 7000 feet, the mountains 8000 to 12,000 feet above the sea. The climate is therefore mostly a rigorous one, running into violent extremes of winter cold, and unrelieved in summer by the sheltering or moistening influence of forests. The plateaux I have mentioned, like that on which Erzerum stands, are covered with snow till April, the passes of the mountains much later; and of course little but corn and other distinctively northern crops can be raised on them. But this great valley of the Araxes which intersects the mountain land is here only 2700 feet above the sea, and as the latitude is that of Seville or Baltimore, one is not surprised to find the heat overpowering even in September, and to see fields of cotton and tobacco bordering the road. A prettier crop than cotton makes it would be hard to name, with its yellow flowers, abundant low leafage and pods snowy white as they burst. Here, too, one comes again upon the maize which we

had parted from in the valley of the Akstafa, on the other side of the mountains. The people make of it a kind of pudding or porridge something like *polenta*. Lines of lofty poplars sometimes enclose the road, and give a temporary defence against the sun for which we are duly grateful, though they hide Ararat, on which we had been keeping our eyes fixed since morning, hoping that the clouds which were shifting themselves uneasily round his top would part sufficiently to let us have a glimpse of it. The vineyards, loaded with purple fruit, would have been too great a temptation to men so hot and thirsty but that they were enclosed by high walls of mud, with a sort of crow's nest on a scaffolding in the centre, where a peasant was perched to watch for and scare away depredators.

In the villages we passed, the houses were all of clay, which looked as if it could scarcely resist a moderately energetic thunderstorm; their walls spotted with lumps of mud which have been stuck on wet where the original structure had begun to show holes or chinks. An Armenian house gets renewed in this fashion like an Irishman's coat, till there is none of the first fabric left. These houses are usually built at the side of or round a small courtyard, enclosed by a high mud wall with one door in it; round two or three sides of the yard the rooms are placed, which have no apertures for light—one can hardly say windows—except into the yard, and little or no furniture. In some the cattle are housed with the family; those of a better sort have a byre on the other side of the yard,

distinct from the living-rooms, and sometimes many such small subsidiary erections. The interior is dark, and with scarcely any furniture, perhaps a low stool or two, and a rough carpet or piece of matting to sit or sleep upon. In summer life goes on chiefly upon the flat roofs, also of clay, where the men sit smoking or eating melons, and where, or else in the gardens, they sleep at night. These villages in the middle of fields, surrounded by vineyards and by groves of the elæagnus, with its handsome brown fruit, and apricot or willow, are mostly inhabited by Armenians, who labour on the soil, getting water from the Araxes by a multitude of channels that run hither and thither through the tilled land. Of the Tatars many are shepherds, accustomed in summer to wander up to the hills with their flocks; some, however, have permanent dwellings in the plain, and do a little husbandry. Their hamlets are generally even ruder and meaner than the Armenian, and their way of life more repulsive. All are, of course, Mohammedans, and most of the Shiah persuasion, having been brought over to it by the Persians, who so lately held these regions. They are reputed to be more fanatical than the Sunnis, often unwilling even to give the passing traveller a bowl of water, and, if they give it, likely to break the vessel he has drunk from lest his uncleanness should pollute them. Of course, they never intermarry with their Armenian neighbours, and never speak their tongue. When communications have to be made, Tatar is the medium, not only because it is the *lingua franca* of all these countries, but

because the Armenians, who are quick at languages, learn it far more readily than the Tatars do Armenian. A good deal of traffic goes on along this road, which is the only highway from Tavriz,[1] the chief commercial city of Northern Persia, to Erivan and Russia generally. As far as the Persian border at Djulfa, it is fit for wheeled carriages; beyond that, one must take horses for ninety miles on to Tavriz. The people whom we met were mostly either Tatar carriers with camels or high piled carts of merchandise, or else Armenian peasants. They wear a simple dress, which consists of a brown cotton shirt, loose, rather short cotton trousers, and a prodigious hat of brown sheepskin, something like a Guard's bearskin, only bigger, which overshadows the whole man. It is, of course, an excellent non-conductor against the sun, but what a weight to carry! Except for the trouble of winding it on and off, a turban would be far more agreeable: turbans, however, are rare in these parts, even among Muslims, and, I fancy, still less common in Persia.

After five hours' driving from Erivan, and changing horses twice, we suddenly turned to the right off the post-road, with its double line of telegraph wires,[2] and, passing through some thickets, emerged on to a long stretch of open ground, marked here and there

[1] Pronounced Tavreez, and commonly spelt Tabriz. The Russian *b* is pronounced nearly as our *v*.

[2] One of these lines belongs to the Russian Government: the other is our own Indo-European, along which the Viceroy of India and the Secretary of State conduct their discussions. It is kept in order by Messrs. Siemens Brothers, and, I need hardly say, is kept in much better order than the Russian line.

with wheel tracks, across which we came in two or three miles to the banks of the Aras. Things have not changed much here in the last nineteen hundred years. The Araxes—*pontem indignatus Araxes*—is spanned by no bridge all down its course, and he who would cross its historic flood must swim, or wade, or ferry. Wondering how we were to get over, we looked with some concern as well as admiration at the wide stream, as wide as the Thames at London Bridge, that swept along between banks of clay which rose ten or twelve feet above the present level of the water, but which in winter are no doubt often covered. The driver, however, promptly ran his horses down the bank and plunged in; when to our astonishment the stream turned out to be only two feet deep. The water, the muddiness of which had prevented us from seeing how shallow it was, scarcely rose to the horses' knees, and did not come into the bottom of our low tarantass; though its flow was so rapid that fording may be pretty dangerous after heavy rains above. On our way back, some days afterwards, we crossed in a ferry-boat stationed a little lower down, which is worked by a rope, and I had then the pleasure of a plunge into this famous river, whose water is not cold enough to do the most exhausted bather any harm. It seemed to have a fuller current than the Kur at Tiflis, yet a wonderfully scanty one, considering the length of its course; this, of course, is easily explained by the great dryness of the country it drains.

Passing through a crowd of picturesque Kurds who had been driving their cattle through by the same ford,

and envying the big greyish-white buffaloes which were cooling themselves in the water, we crossed a tract intersected by numerous channels drawn from the river for irrigation, bordered with tall reeds, and enclosing fields of rice, already reaped, and cotton whose pods were just bursting with white fluff. In the reedy marshes which these channels feed, there is abundance of wild hogs. They come out at night, and ravage the rice-fields of the Tatars; and as the Mohammedan scruples of the latter prevent them from touching, and practically therefore from hunting down, this unclean animal, the hogs have a fine time of it. If ever that Araxes valley railway to India, whereof the Russians talk, comes to be made, perhaps some of our military pig-stickers will halt here on their way and give the Armenians a lesson in that exciting sport. At last, after three or four miles' driving, a cluster of bushes told us that a village was near, and through them we discovered the trim cantonments of our destination, the Russian station of Aralykh. Here there is always kept a detachment of Cossacks, and the colonel in command is the chief military authority over the skirts of the two Ararats, charged to guard the frontier and look after the predatory bands that are said to hang about it. The summit of Little Ararat is the meeting-point of the Russian, Persian, and Turkish empires, and every one knows that border lands have been from time immemorial the haunts of dangerous or turbulent characters, since they can find an easy escape from the jurisdiction against which they have offended into another that knows nothing about them.

Where, as here, there are three such jurisdictions, these risks are of course intensified, especially as there is no attempt made to keep order in the Turkish or Persian dominions, nothing that deserves to be called a police. So I dare say there would be a good deal of brigandage if there were anybody to rob, but the villages of the Aras valley are almost too poor to be worth plundering, and travellers, except on the main road to Tavriz, are very rare. The mountains are inhabited only by a few wandering Kurds. It will appear in the sequel that we saw, with our own eyes, no trace whatever of banditti. But as the colonel, who was a very sensible man, particularly begged us not to ramble more than a mile from the station, offering an escort if we wished to go farther, one could not but suppose there must really be some hidden dangers in these apparently deserted slopes. Robbers have for many generations been made an excuse for not exploring the mountain to find the Ark. In hearing about them, we were often reminded of the lines in *Bishop Blougram's Apology*—

> "Such a traveller told you his last news,
> He saw the Ark a-top of Ararat;
> But did not climb there since 'twas getting late,
> And robber bands infest the mountain's foot."

Aralykh is not fortified, for there is no attack to be expected from these wretched banditti, whoever they are, nor does Russia appear to fancy an invasion from Turkey or Persia likely enough to be worth guarding against. It is merely a row of wooden barracks, neatly painted, with a smith's and carpenter's

shop, cottages for the army followers, and so forth, scattered round it, and a few trees, giving a little shade in summer and shelter from the violent winter winds. The situation is striking. It is exactly on the line where the last slope of Ararat, an extremely gentle slope of not more than two or three degrees in inclination, melts into the perfectly flat bottom of the Aras valley.[1] Looking up this slope, the mountain seems quite close, though in reality its true base, that is, the point where the ground begins to rise sharply, is fully four hours (twelve miles) distant. On this its north-eastern side, one looks right into the great black chasm, and sees, topping the cliffs that surround that chasm, a cornice of ice 300 or 400 feet in thickness, lying at a height of about 14,000 feet, and above, a steep slope of snow, pierced here and there by rocks running up to the summit. A little to the west of south, and about seventeen miles distant, rises the singularly elegant peak of Little Ararat, appearing from this point as a regular slightly truncated cone, which in the autumn is free from snow.[2] In the plain, and only a few miles off to the south-west, a low rocky eminence is seen, close to the famous monastery of Khorvirab, where St. Gregory the Illuminator, the apostle of Armenia, was for fourteen years confined in a dry well by his cousin, King Tiridates. So

[1] Aralykh is 2602 feet above the sea-level.

[2] The view of the two Ararats in the frontispiece is taken from Syrbaghan, a Tatar village about two miles south-west of Aralykh, and therefore shows the mountains in what is practically the same aspect as that described in the text. This view is drawn after one of Parrot's, with some alterations for which I am responsible.

at least says the Armenian Church. The very ancient ruins on it are sometimes taken to be the site of the famous city of Artaxata, which, according to Strabo, was built for King Artaxias (who, revolting from Antiochus the Great, founded an Armenian kingdom) by Hannibal, after he had left Antiochus, and before he sought his last refuge with Prusias of Bithynia.[1] Others place Artaxata nearer to Erivan on the river Medzamor, and at some distance from the present bed of the Araxes, which, according to Tacitus (Ann. xiii. 41) flowed under the walls of Artaxata. It was one of the two capitals of Digran or Tigranes, the great Armenian conqueror, and captured by Lucullus, when, after defeating Mithridates of Pontus, he carried the Roman arms against Tigranes, the son-in-law and ally of the latter, into these remote regions, which even Alexander had not entered. A century and a half later it was again taken and razed to the ground by Corbulo, one of the generals of Nero, and was subsequently rebuilt by Tiridates, a *protégé* of Nero's, under the name of Neronia. When, about A.D. 370, it was again taken and burnt by the Persians, it is said to have contained a population of 200,000, 40,000 of them Jews.

[1] Strabo, xi. p. 528: cf. Plutarch Lucull. c. 31. The story is doubted by some historians, and among others by Mommsen (Röm. Gesch. b. iii. c. ix.). If it be a fable, the evidence it gives of the fame of Hannibal through the East is all the more striking. I may, however, remark—(1) that the alleged building of Artaxata by Hannibal took place only a century and a half before Strabo's time; (2) that it does not appear that any alibi can be proved for Hannibal at the time assigned for his visit to Armenia; and (3) that there is apparently no other instance of Hannibal's name appearing in Oriental legend, like Alexander or Semiramis, as the reputed author of great works.

At Aralykh we were received with the utmost courtesy by the officer in command, Colonel Temirhan Aktolovitch Shipshef, a Mohammedan noble from the Kabarda, on the north side of the Caucasus, and a man of many and varied accomplishments. To our great regret, as he spoke no West European language, and we no Russian, our communications were comparatively limited; but even the conversation carried on through an interpreting friend enabled us to perceive that he was well read, not only in military matters, but in general history and literature. He had a particular admiration for Cromwell, about the recent lives of whom he questioned us, and discoursed with great acuteness as well as knowledge on European politics and literature, including the works of two writers who seem to be favourites in Russia, the late Mr. Buckle and Mr. Herbert Spencer. Although a strict teetotaller himself, as a good Muslim ought to be, his table was well supplied with the choicest wines of Transcaucasia, as well as with a liquor to which the prohibition of the Prophet is supposed not to apply, and which, in spite of its high price, is largely consumed in these countries, English bottled porter. His house was spacious, with large, low rooms, all on the ground floor, and by closing the shutters we were able to get some cool during the day, especially as a slight breeze rose in the afternoon. At night, however, it was terribly hot, for we were enjoined to keep the windows shut to avoid the fever-producing miasma from the adjoining marshes. Even our concentrated solution of carbolic

acid, though it was strong enough to burn a hole in my forehead, did not wholly repel the mosquitoes whom these marshes rear. The pleasantest time was the evening, when we sat on the verandah beside our genial host, sipping tumbler after tumbler of delicious lemon-flavoured tea, and watching the exquisite colours of sunset die away in this lucent air into the balmy vivid night. Concerning Ararat we had much discourse, the upshot of which was that nobody at Aralykh knew anything of former ascents, nor of how it ought to be attacked, but that we should have horses and Cossacks to take us to Sardarbulakh, a small military outpost high up on the way which leads over the pass between Great and Little Ararat to Bayazid, and as much farther as horses or Cossacks could go. We could desire no more, so this was settled, and we were grateful. Though the colonel doubtless marvelled in his heart what could be our motive for a difficult and fatiguing expedition, the success of which was so uncertain, he was too polite to say so, talking as gravely about the matter as if he had been president of an Alpine club sending out his explorers with instructions. A day, however, was needed to make preparations, and while these went forward, we got the heads and spikes of our ice-axes fitted with shafts by a German carpenter attached to the station, and rambled out under umbrellas over the slope that rose almost imperceptibly to the south-east, an hour's walking on which seemed to bring us no nearer to the mountain. It was an arid waste of white volcanic ash or sand, covered with prickly

shrubs (the commonest of them being that *Calligonum polygonoides* which supplies fuel to the Kurds in winter), among which lizards and black scorpions wriggle about. We ought, of course, to have gone—any energetic traveller would have gone—to examine the ruins of Artaxata, but the overpowering heat and the weariness of the last few days and sleepless nights, which began to tell as soon as we began to rest, made us too languid even for so obvious a duty. So we dawdled, and panted, and dozed, and watched the clouds shift and break and form again round the solemn snowy cone till another evening descended and it glittered clear and cold beneath the stars.

CHAPTER VI.

ARARAT.

NONE of the native peoples that behold from the surrounding plains and valleys the silvery crest of Ararat know it by that name. The Armenians call it Massis, or Massis Ljarn (*ljarn* meaning "mountain"), a name which we may connect with the Masius of Strabo (though his description of that mountain does not suit ours); the Tatars and Turks, Aghri Dagh, which is interpreted as meaning "curved mountain," or "painful mountain"; the Persians, Koh i Nuh, "the mountain of Noah," or, according to Sir John Chardin, Sahat Toppin, which he interprets to mean "the Happy Hillock." It has received among geographers the name of Ararat, which the Russian use is now beginning to spread in the neighbourhood, and which the ecclesiastics at Etchmiadzin have taken as the title of a monthly magazine they publish, only from its identification with the Biblical mountain of the Ark, an identification whose history is curious.

The only topographical reference in the Scripture narrative of the Flood is to be found in the words, Genesis viii. 4,—"In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month," "the ark rested upon the

mountains of Ararat," which may be taken as equivalent to "on a mountain of (or in) Ararat." The word Ararat is used in three, or rather two, other places in Scripture. One is in 2 Kings xix. 37, and the parallel passage in Isaiah xxxvii. 38, where it is said of the sons of Sennacherib, who had just murdered their father, that "they escaped into the land of Ararat," rendered in our version, and in the Septuagint, "Armenia." The other is in Jeremiah li. 27, "Call together against her" (i.e. Babylon) "the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz." The question then is, what does this Ararat denote? Clearly the Alexandrian translators took it for Armenia; so does the Vulgate when it renders in Genesis viii. 4 the words which we translate, "on the mountains of Ararat," by "super montes Armeniae." This narrows it a little, and St. Jerome himself helps us to narrow it still further when, in his commentary on Isaiah xxxvii. 38, he says that "Ararat means the plain of the middle Araxes, which lies at the foot of the great mountain Taurus." Besides, Moses of Chorene, the well-known Armenian historian of the fifth century, speaks of a province or district he calls Ajrarat, lying on the Araxes, and which some have tried to identify with the name of the Alarodians in Herodotus. Now as our modern Mount Ararat, Aghri Dagh, is by far the highest and most conspicuous mountain of that region, no one who looked at it, already knowing the story of the Flood, could doubt that it was the first part of the dry land to appear as the waters dried up, so much does it rise above all its neighbours.

The identification, therefore, is natural enough: what it is of more consequence to determine is how early it took place; for as there is little or no trace of an independent local tradition of the Flood, we may assume the identification to rest entirely on the use of the name Ararat in the Hebrew narrative. Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* bk. i. ch. iii.) says that the Armenians called the place where Noah descended the disembarking place (*ἀποβατήριον*), "for the Ark being saved in that place, its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day," and also quotes Nicolas of Damascus, who writes that "in Armenia, above Minyas, there is a great mountain called Baris (is this word the Armenian Masis?), upon which it is said that many who escaped at the time of the Flood were saved, and that one who was carried in an ark came ashore on the top of it, and that the remains of the wood were preserved for a long while. This might be the man about whom Moses, the law-giver of the Jews, wrote." This *ἀποβατήριον* has usually been identified with the town of Nakhitchevan (called by Ptolemy Naxuana), which stands on the Araxes, about thirty-five miles south-east from our mountain, and whose name the modern Armenians explain as meaning "he descended first,"[1] which would seem to show that in the first century of our era—and how much sooner we cannot say—the Armenians living round the mountain believed it to be the Ark moun-

[1] Nöldeke, however, to whose 'Untersuchungen zur Kritik des alten Testaments' the curious reader may be referred for a learned discussion of the subject, is informed by a competent Armenian scholar that this etymology is, as might have been supposed, impossible.

tain. They might have heard of the Bible narrative from Jews, who were already beginning to be scattered through these countries (there is a story that some of those carried away by Shalmanezer were settled in Armenia and Georgia); they might know the Chaldaean legend of the Flood, which was preserved by Berosus, to whom Josephus so often refers, and a version of which has been found on clay tablets in the ruins of Nineveh and deciphered by the late Mr. George Smith. The curious thing is that this Chaldee legend fixed the spot of Noah's landing in a quite different region, although one which was sometimes included in the wide and loose name Armenia, viz. in the mountain land (called by the Jews Qardu) which rises to the east of the Upper Tigris, that is, north-east of Nineveh and Mosul, in the direction of Urumia. This country was called in ancient times Gordyene, a name which appears in the Hebrew Qardu, and in our modern name Kurds, as well as in the Karduchi of Xenophon. As its mountains, although far less lofty than our modern Ararat, are of great height, and visible far away into the Assyrian plain (Mr. Layard saw Aghri Dagh from the summit of one of them), it was natural for the inhabitants of that plain to assume that they were the highest on earth, which the Deluge would be the last to cover, and where the vessel of safety would come to land. The Jews also, probably at the time of the Captivity, took up this notion, and it became the dominant one among them, is frequently given in the Talmud, and by Josephus himself, in a passage (*Ant. Jud.* xx. ii. 2)

where he mentions that in the country of Adiabene, and in the district of Carrae (others read "of the Cardi" = Kurds), there were preserved the remains of the Ark. Probably he thought that the disembarking place mentioned in the beginning of his treatise was here, for he quotes Berosus as stating that it was among the Kurds, who in those days are not mentioned so far north as they wander now. Berosus' words are, "It is said that there is still some part of this ship in Armenia at the mountain of the Cordyaeans (*πρὸς τῷ ὄρει τῶν Κορδυαίων*), and that some people carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they take away and use chiefly as amulets for the averting of mischief." But probably Josephus' ideas of the geography of these regions were vague enough, and he may not have known that from the land of Ajrarat, on the middle Araxes, to Gordyene it is more than 200 miles. From the Jews, this idea that Gordyene was the Biblical spot passed to the Syrian Church, and became the prevailing view throughout the Christian East, as it still is among the Nestorians, who dwell hard by. It passed also to the Muslims; and Gudi, the mountain where the Ark rested according to the Koran, is usually placed by them in the same Kurdish land, near the spot where there seems to have stood for several centuries (it was burnt in A.D. 655, but may have been rebuilt later) a convent to which tradition pointed as the guardian of the sacred fragments. Those who assume, as many Oriental scholars do, that the original tradition of the Flood is to be found in Assyria, naturally prefer this

latter identification, since the mountains of Southern Kurdistan, the Qardu land, are quite high enough to satisfy the narrative, and must have been always familiar to the Chaldees, whereas the Araxes valley lies far away to the north, and the fact that its summits are really loftier would in those times be little known or regarded. Without the aid of our modern scientific appliances, men's ideas of relative height are even vaguer and less capable of verification than their ideas of distance. On the other hand, the view which holds the Ararat of the Bible to lie in Northern Armenia, near the Araxes, can appeal not only to the undoubted fact that there was in that region the province called Ajrarat, but also to the reference to a "kingdom of Ararat" in Jeremiah li. 27, which could hardly apply to Gordyene.[1] And one does not see why the Old Testament writers, whose geographical knowledge was in some points a good deal wider than is commonly assumed, should not have heard of the very lofty summits that lie in this part of Armenia. Full liberty is therefore left to the traveller to believe our Ararat, the snowy sovereign of the Araxes plain, to be the true Ararat, and certainly no one who had ever seen it rising in solitary majesty far above all its attendant peaks could doubt that its summit must have first pierced the receding waves.

The modern Armenian tradition of course goes for nothing in settling the question, for that tradition cannot be shown to be older than our own era, and is easily accounted for by the use of the word Ararat in

[1] See Nöldeke, *ut supra*.

the book of Genesis, which the Armenians, when Jews or Christians came among them, would of course identify with their Ajrarat. Once established, the tradition held its ground, and budded out into many fantastic legends, some of them still lingering in Armenia, some only known to us by the notices of passing mediæval travellers. Marco Polo, whose route does not seem to have led him near it, says only, in speaking of Armenia :—" Here is an exceeding great mountain : on which it is said the Ark of Noah rested, and for this cause it is called the mountain of the Ark of Noah. The circuit of its base cannot be traversed in less than two days ; and the ascent is rendered impossible by the snow on its summit, which never dissolves, but is increased by each successive fall. On the lower declivities the melted snows cause an abundant vegetation, and afford rich pastures for the cattle which in summer resort thither from all the surrounding countries." But the Franciscan friar, William of Rubruk, who, in 1254, a little before Marco Polo's time, had on his return from Karakorum passed under Ararat, says that here upon the higher of two great mountains above the river Araxes the Ark rested, which mountain cannot be ascended, though the earnest prayers of a pious monk prevailed so far that a piece of the wood of the Ark was brought to him by an angel, which piece is still preserved in a church near by as a holy relic. He gives Massis as the name of this mountain, and adds that it is the mother of the world: "super Massis nullus debet ascendere quia est mater mundi."

Sir John Maundeville, of pious and veracious memory, has also a good deal to tell us. After speaking of Trapazond (Trebizond), and stating that from there "men go to Ermonye (Armenia) the Great unto a cytee that is clept Artyroun (Erzerum), that was wont to ben a gode cytee and a plentyous, but the Turkes han gretly wasted it," he proceeds:—"Fro Artyroun go men to an Hille that is clept Sabisocolle. And there besyde is another Hille that men clepen Ararathe: but the Jews clepen it Taneez, where Noes Schipp rested: and zit is upon that Montayne: and men may see it a ferr in cleer wedre: and that Montayne is well a 7 Myle high. And sum men seyn that they have seen and touched the Schipp; and put here Fyngres in the parties where the Feend went out whan that Noe seyd '*Benedicite.*' But thei that seyn such Wordes seyn here Wille, for a man may not gon up the Montayne for gret plentee of Snow that is alle weyes on that Montayne nouther Somer ne Winter; so that no man may gon up there: ne nevere man did, sithe the tyme of Noe: saf a Monk that be the grace of God broughte on of the Plankes down, that zit is in the Mynstre at the foot of the Montayne. And besyde is the Cytee of Dayne that Noe founded. And faste by is the Cytee of Any, in the whiche were 1000 churches. But upon that Montayne to gon up this Monk had gret desir; and so upon a day he wente up and whan he was upward the 3 part of the Montayne he was so wery that he myghte no ferthere, and so he rested him and felle to slepe; and whan he awoke he fonde himself

liggynge at the foot of the Montayne. And then he preyede devoutly to God that he wolde vouche saf to suffre him gon up. And an Angelle cam to him and seyde that he scholde gon up; and so he did. And sithe that tyme never non. Wherfore men scholde not beleeve such Woordes."

This laudable scepticism of Sir John's prevailed, for it has long been almost an article of faith with the Armenian Church that the top of Ararat is inaccessible. Even the legend of the monk, which, as we find from Friar William, is as old as the thirteenth century, is usually given in a form which confirms still further the sacredness of the mountain. St. Jacob (Hagop), as the monk is named, was consumed by a pious desire to reach and venerate the holy Ark, which could in seasons of fair weather be descried from beneath, and three several times he essayed to climb the steep and rocky slopes. Each time, after reaching a great height, he fell into a deep sleep, and, when he woke, found himself at the foot of the mountain. After the third time, an angel appeared to him while he still lay in slumber, and told him that God had forbidden mortal foot ever to tread the sacred summit or touch the vessel in which mankind had been preserved, but that on him, in reward for his devout perseverance, there should be bestowed a fragment of its wood. This fragment he placed on the sleeper's breast, and vanished; it is that which is still preserved in the treasury at Etchmiadzin, or, as others say, in the monastery of Kjeghart; and the saint is commemorated by the little monastery of

St. Jacob, which stands, or rather stood till 1840, on the slopes of Ararat, above the valley of Arghuri, the spot of the angel's appearing. Every succeeding traveller has repeated this tale, with variations due to his informant or his own imagination: so, though the reader has probably heard it, I dare not break through a custom so long established. Among these repeaters is Sir John Chardin, who travelled through Armenia and Persia towards the end of the seventeenth century, and whose remarks upon it are as follows. They show the progress which criticism had been making since the days of the earlier Sir John.

"This is the Tale that they tell, upon which I shall observe 2 Things. First, that it has no coherence with the relations of ancient authors as Josephus, Berosus, or Nicolaus of Damascus, who assure us that the Remainders of the Ark were to be seen, and that the people took the Pitch with which it was besmeared as an Antidote against Several Distempers. The second, that whereas it is taken for a Miracle that no Body can get up to the Top: I should rather take it for a greater Miracle that any Man should climb up so high. For the Mountain is altogether uninhabited, and from the Halfway to the Top of all, perpetually covered with Snow that never melts, so that all the Seasons of the Year it appears to be a prodigious heap of nothing but Snow."

Whether Chardin himself believed the Ark to be still on the top of the mountain, does not appear. In two views of it which he gives, showing also Erivan and Etchmiadzin, the Ark appears, in shape exactly

the Ark of the nursery on Sunday afternoons, poised on the summit of Great Ararat. But this may be merely emblematic; indeed I have not found any author who says he has himself seen it, though plenty who (like the retailers of ghost stories) mention other people who have.

Religious fancy has connected many places in the neighbourhood with the Biblical narrative. Not to speak of the sites which have been suggested in the Araxes valley for the Garden of Eden, the name of Arghuri itself is derived from two Armenian words which mean, "he planted the vine"; it is taken to be the spot where Noah planted that first vineyard which is mentioned in Genesis ix. 20: and till 1840, when the village was overwhelmed by a tremendous fall of rocks, shaken down by the great earthquake of that year, an ancient vine stock, still bearing grapes, was pointed out as that which had been planted by the patriarch's hands. The town of Marand, the Marunda of Ptolemy (in Armenian = "the mother is there"), is said to be called after the wife of Noah, who there died and was buried; and (as has been mentioned already) the name of another still considerable town, Nakhitchevan, in the Araxes valley, is explained to mean, "he descended first," and has therefore been identified with the *ἀποβατήριον* of Josephus aforesaid. There too was shown, perhaps is still shown, the tomb of Noah. Modern historians and geographers have been hardly less fanciful than Armenian monks: some derive the Tatar name Aghri or Arghi Dagh from the word *Arca*. Some imagine a relation between this and

the *Argo;* others connect the word *baris* (mentioned above as an ancient name for the mountain) with a supposed Oriental word meaning "boat" (see Herodotus, ii. 96), or with the Armenian *bariz* (= exit); in fine, there is no end to the whimsical speculations that attach themselves to the mountain. What is certain is that the word Ararat, though it is a genuine old Armenian name for a district, and is derived by Moses of Chorene from *Arai jarat*, "the fall of Arai," a mythical Armenian king slain in battle with Semiramis, has never been the name by which those who lived round the mountain have known it, albeit it is found in the Armenian version of the Bible just as in our own.

Of the other legends that cluster round the mountain, I shall mention only two. One of them connects it with the so-called Chaldaean worship of the stars, and affirm that upon it stood a pillar with a figure of a star; and that before the birth of Christ twelve wise men were stationed by this pillar to watch for the appearing of the star in the east, which three of them followed, when it appeared, to Bethlehem. The other, of a very different kind, relates to a spring which bursts forth on the side of the Great Chasm, above the spot where the convent of St. Jacob stood. There is a bird called by the Armenians *tetagush*, which pursues and feeds on the locusts whose swarms are such a plague to this country. Now, the water of this sacred spring possesses the property of attracting the tetagush, and when the locusts appear, the first thing to be done is to fetch a bottle of it, and set it on the

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ground near them, taking care not to let it touch the ground upon its way. The bird immediately appears; the locusts are devoured, and the crops are saved. It is a pity the Canadians have no *tetagush* to set at their destroying beetle.

Before finally quitting the realm of fancy for that of fact, I will repeat an observation by which more than one orographer of distinction, struck by the remarkable geographical position which Ararat occupies,[1] has suggested a sort of justification for the Armenian view that it is the centre of the earth. It stands in the centre of the longest line of the old continent, stretching from the Cape of Good Hope to Behring Straits. It is also in the line of the great deserts and of the great inland seas from Gibraltar to Lake Baikal, that is, in a line of almost continuous depressions. It is almost exactly equidistant from the Black Sea, the Caspian, and the northern end of the great Mesopotamian plain, which at no distant period was probably also part of the ocean bed.

Taking the two Ararats together, they form an elliptical mass of about twenty-five miles in length from north-west to south-east, and about half that width. This mass rises on the north and east out of the alluvial plain of the Aras, whose height is here from 2800 to 2500 feet above the sea, and on the south-west sinks into the valley or rather plateau of Bayazid, which lies between 4000 and 5000 feet above sea-level, and also discharges its waters towards the

[1] See Ritter, 'Erdkunde,' vol. x., who quotes K. von Raumer on the point.

Aras. It is therefore quite isolated on all sides but the north-west, where a depression or col about 7000 feet high connects it with a long ridge of volcanic mountains, which, under the names of Pambak, Synak Dagh, and Parly Dagh, runs away to the westward between the basins of the Aras and Murad Su (Eastern Euphrates), and connects itself south of Erzerum with the great range of the Bingöl Dagh, or north-eastern Taurus, as well as with the southern offsets of the Anti-Caucasus. Over against it to the north, nearly forty miles away, rise the three volcanic pinnacles, fragments of a broken crater rim, of Ala Göz (13,436 feet); to the east, beyond the wide valley of the Aras, is the great plateau of the Kara Bagh, some of whose highest volcanic tops exceed 11,000 feet, while on the south, beyond Bayazid and the Upper Euphrates, ranges nearly equally lofty run away down towards the Lake of Van in the south and the Lake of Urumia in the south-east. Orographically and geologically, Ararat is connected with all these, but the plain immediately around it is wide enough to give it that air of standing quite alone which so greatly contributes to its grandeur, and speaks so clearly of its volcanic origin.

Out of the great elliptical mass I have described rise two peaks, their bases confluent at a height of 8800 feet, their summits about seven miles apart. The higher, Great Ararat, is 17,000 feet above the sea-level,[1] the lower, Little Ararat, 12,840 feet. They are

[1] The different measurements of the height of Ararat vary a little. Parrot, by the barometer, made it 17,325 English feet; Fedorof, by

very similar in geological structure, but sufficiently dissimilar in appearance, like the sisters in Virgil—

"Facies non omnibus una
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum"—

to enhance the effect of one another. For while Little Ararat is an elegant cone or pyramid, rising with steep, smooth, regular sides into a comparatively sharp peak, Great Ararat is a huge, broad-shouldered mass, more of a dome than a cone, supported by strong buttresses, and throwing out rough ribs or ridges of rock that stand out like knotty muscles from its solid trunk. The greatest length of this dome is from north-west to south-east. Towards the north-east, that is, on one of its long sides, it descends very abruptly towards the Aras plain, forming in places ranges of magnificent black precipice, capped with ice-beds many hundreds of feet in thickness, and pierced by a profound glen or chasm. On the opposite or south-west side the fall is somewhat less rapid; towards the south-east, where the peak faces Little Ararat, it is steep indeed, but in most parts not precipitous (this is the side up which I ascended); while towards the north-west the declivity is longer and more gentle, a succession of terraces, separated by moderately difficult slopes, falling away into an immense fan-shaped base, which spreads far into the Araxes plain. This is, therefore, the side on which occur the only considerable fields of snow or rather *névé* (the others being too abrupt for much snow to

trigonometry, 17,130 feet; some other observer gives 17,260 feet, which has been commonly adopted in England; General Chodzko, who ascended in 1850, makes it 16,916 feet..

lie), and it was by advancing over them that Parrot effected the first ascent of the mountain. The upper slopes, where not snow-covered, are extremely rough and broken, seamed by gullies, the larger of which are no doubt volcanic fissures, the smaller probably produced by winter storms, rising here and there into lofty towers and ridges of rock, and strewn with prodigious masses of loose stone, broken by the weather into wildly fantastic shapes. All this part, above 10,000 or 11,000 feet, is almost wholly bare of vegetation. The middle part of the declivity is somewhat less rugged, and the lowest slopes of all, by which the mass subsides into the plain, are singularly smooth and uniform. On the north-east side these basal slopes, as I may call them, are two. First comes one which rises from the Aras marshes at an angle of about 2½ degrees for some six miles, and then another, which rises for, say, four miles, at an angle of 4½ degrees. After this second, the steep part of the mountain begins. Its average angle on the north-west declivity is about 17 degrees, on the south-east 25 to 30 degrees.

Both peaks are entirely composed of igneous rock, and there is no question that they belong to what may be called the grand volcanic system of North-western Asia, the main lines of whose action are indicated in a general way by the direction of the chief mountain chains, such direction being supposed to correspond to axes of elevation, or, as it is sometimes expressed, to lines of fissure. Along these lines of fissure, continuously or at intervals, the igneous masses

forming the highest part of such chains were from time to time ejected. One such line, or perhaps more than one, is represented by the Caucasus, where, besides the granitic mountains on the axis, there are several comparatively modern volcanic summits, such as Elbruz, Kazbek, and Basarjusi. Another line of elevation, marked by volcanic outbursts, appears in the north-eastern ranges of Taurus; another in the range dividing the upper valleys of the Kur and Aras. Still nearer to Ararat, the great mass of Ala Göz, on the north, and the continuation of that mass to the east and south-east in the mountains that surround the Goktcha lake, are all volcanic, composed chiefly of trachyte rock. The valley of the Aras itself is filled by recent alluvial deposits, out of which rise isolated palæozoic hills composed of carboniferous limestone or Devonian strata, which appear again farther to the south, in the hills through which the Aras takes its way to Nakhitchevan and the Persian border; while farther to the south and west, newer sedimentary rocks range southwards, pierced here and there by the volcanic outbursts which reach as far as Lake Van.

The only geologist of eminence who has carefully examined Ararat is Hermann Abich, now one of the patriarchs of the science; and probably the best thing I can do is to abridge his view of its structure and history, so far as I can gather it from the various papers which he has contributed to different scientific journals.[1] He holds the inner and original part of

[1] See in particular his paper, "Ararat in seiner genetischen Bildung," in the *Transactions* of the German Geological Society for 1870, in which

the mass to be composed of trachyte and trachytic tuffs, poured out at a comparatively early period in dome-shaped hills, three of which, placed along a line of fissure running nearly north-west and south-east, were Little Ararat, Great Ararat, and the rounded plateau called, from a small pond or pool upon it (*ghöll* = lake, in Tatar), Kip Ghöll, which lies about four miles north-west by west of the top of Great Ararat. The eruptive forces which raised these hills having, after an interval of quiescence, resumed their activity in comparatively recent times, probably in what we call the pleiocene age, violent splittings and burstings of the trachytic rocks went on, mainly along the old lines of fissure, and vast quantities of lava of a doleritic or basaltic character were poured out from various points along these fissures. The pressing-up from beneath of the edges of the fissures gave to the summits of both Great and Little Ararat their present form; no eruptions taking place from the actual tops, although some of the fissure-vents which discharged streams of doleritic lava were not far below these summits, while a number of minor cones were raised and craters formed along the sides of the mountain, especially to the south-east of Great Ararat, and on Kip Ghöll, where several large and well-marked crateriform hollows may be still made out. Along with this splitting, there went on a process of elevation, by which the southern edge of one huge cleft was raised to be the present summit of Great Ararat,

the views expressed in his paper contributed to the *Transactions* of the Geological Society of Paris in 1850 are slightly modified.

while its other side remained at, or sank to, a much lower level; other rifts were also formed at right angles to the principal axis, one of which was the origin of the remarkable chasm on the north-east side of the mountain, which bears much similarity to the famous Val del Bove on Etna. Its present shape and dimensions—it is nearly 9000 feet deep, and surrounded by monstrous precipices—are probably, like those of the Sicilian valley, due to subsequent erosion; but there may well have been eruptions from it in some earlier stage. A somewhat similar, but smaller, chasm penetrates deep into the mountain on the opposite or south-western side.

According to this theory, there never was a great central crater at the summit of either Great or Little Ararat. The forms of those two peaks are due to the elevating and rending forces which, operating on pre-existing trachytic masses, squeezed up the edges of the clefts they opened into comparatively sharp points, while prodigious and long-continued eruptions sometimes from these clefts, sometimes from cones of eruption built up round the principal orifices along their line, increased the external volume of the mountain, and in the case of Great Ararat turned it from a comparatively sharp cone, similar to Little Ararat, into the broad-shouldered, grandly buttressed mass which it now presents. Unlike these two loftier summits, Kip Ghöll would appear to approach more nearly the normal type of a modern volcano, having been built up, not so much by a general upheaval, as by external accretion from the lava, scoriæ, and ashes,

ejected from its craters; and the gentler inclination of the northern slope of the peak of Great Ararat would be accounted for by the fact that behind Kip Ghöll to the south-east, in the direction of that peak, there were other similar craters which filled up the depression between it and Kip Ghöll, and gave to the north-west face of the mountain its present appearance of a series of descending terraces. Subsequent denudation continued through many thousands, or millions, of years, and that process of decay and levelling which all mountains undergo has worn down the inequalities of the sides, has given to Little Ararat its figure of a wonderfully regular pyramidal cone, has filled up some and scooped out others of the fissures on Great Ararat until the former seem to be merely shallow troughs running down the mountain face, while the latter are profound gorges such as the great chasm, has obliterated many of the lateral craters by breaking down their rims and raising the level of their bottoms.

To criticise this theory, which perhaps retains too much of the old upheaval doctrines of von Buch and Élie de Beaumont to be altogether acceptable to British geologists, would require far wider geological knowledge than I possess, as well as a more careful study of Ararat itself than I had time for. The existence, however, of the great fissures to which Herr Abich attributes so much is unquestionable; one in particular, on the south-east side of the mountain, runs down for many thousand feet, bordered by lofty cliffs of black or reddish porphyritic trachyte, and has

every appearance of having discharged currents of lava. I can also confirm what he says as to the absence of any trace of a crater on the summit of Great Ararat. The top (which I shall describe in the following chapter) forms a small undulating plateau of snow, with two rounded heights or bosses rising out of it; there is no appearance of a circular hollow, and although the cap of *névé* is thick enough to obscure in some degree the structure of the rocky ground beneath, it could hardly have its present form if there really lay underneath it sharp cliffs surrounding a basin, such as are seen in most volcanoes. Nothing, for instance, could be less like the snowy summit of Hekla, where there is a beautiful crater almost surrounded by an *arête*, than is the top of Ararat. Similarly, the top of Little Ararat is nearly flat, with many vast blocks and masses of rock on it, but no central depression, no rim of cliffs. It would, however, be rash to infer from the absence of a crater now that none ever existed on these summits, for many volcanoes might be cited whose central crater has been almost or even quite obliterated, though the general structure of the mountain enables us to conclude its former existence.[1] It may therefore be that on Great Ararat the crater had been, at the time when volcanic action through its chimney ceased, almost filled up within by the ejection of solid matter from that chimney, so that the crateral form had

[1] Instances may be found referred to in Mr. Scrope's treatise on Volcanoes, and Professor Judd's book on Volcanoes, where this question is particularly discussed.

almost disappeared. Or, again, it is possible that, in the immense period that has elapsed since the last eruption from the summit, the sides of the crateral basin which then existed have been completely broken down by decay, the destructive action of the atmosphere being doubly powerful at this prodigious height, where frosts and storms are constantly raging. Or, lastly, the summit, as we now see it, may be the remains of one side of a large crater, the other sides having been destroyed by some paroxysmal eruption, as the one side of Somma, the ancient Vesuvius, was destroyed in the tremendous outburst of A.D. 72.

Supposing that there once existed a central vent of eruption, opening at the top of Ararat, it would be in the usual order of volcanic phenomena for this main vent, whose presence had determined the height and original shape of the mountain, to pass into a state of quiescence while the minor eruptive points on the flanks still remained active, and perhaps became more numerous. A great volcano has been compared to a great tree, which dies down from the top. When the explosive forces become weaker, they are no longer able to raise the molten masses from within to the height of the central orifice, but produce a crack somewhere in the sides; this becomes a crater, is perhaps raised into a cone, and through it minor eruptions go on. The repetition of the process multiplies these secondary vents all round the great central chimney, which probably continues to emit steam and light ashes, but no longer discharges molten

rock, while the parasitic cones and craters cover the skirts of the mountain with large deposits of scoriæ and ash, and send into the plain below far-reaching streams of lava. This is the process now going on in many famous volcanoes, of which I may again take Hekla as an instance. Although the soil of its central crater is still hot in some places, and emits a little sulphurous vapour, no eruption has issued thence for a long time; and the last one, that of 1845, was from a chasm about 1000 feet below the top. So, too, most of the lava flows of Etna have taken place from lateral vents; no less than 700 of which have been counted on its sides. Such parasitic craters are very conspicuous on Ararat. On the north-west there are several on the large dome-shaped heights of Kip Ghöll; on the south-east, a good many lie close together on the ridge which unites Great to Little Ararat, behind the spring and station of Sardarbulakh, some of them looking as fresh as if they had been burning last week. The most conspicuous secondary cone of eruption is one which rises boldly on the east-south-east slope, between Sardarbulakh and the top, and from the plain below looks like a huge tooth stuck on the mountain side.[1] Its top is about 13,000 feet above the sea-level. From these craters all sorts of volcanic materials have been ejected, trachytes, andesites, and basalts of various descriptions, with pitchstones, ashes whose consolidation has formed

[1] It appears in the frontispiece as a black projection from the snowy east-south-eastern side of the mountain, and goes by the name of Tach Kilissa.

tuff beds, scoriæ like the slag from a furnace, pumice, and in some places at the south-western foot of the mountain, obsidian, a sort of volcanic glass, black or dark green like the glass of a bottle. A remarkable bed or dyke of this obsidian is also to be found between Erivan and Daratchichak, where it crosses the high-road; it is made by the workmen of Tiflis into handsome ornaments, but is less clear and glossy than that of the famous obsidian mountain Hrafntinnuhryggr, in Iceland.

When the fires of Ararat became extinct is mere matter of guess; it may have been six thousand or sixty thousand years ago. All that can be said is that no record exists of any eruption in historical times. Stories indeed there are in the Armenian historians of mountains emitting fire and smoke—this is alleged to have happened in A.D. 441—and of darkness prevailing for thirty days, but they do not point to Ararat in particular, and are too vague to enable us to set any store by them. A German traveller named Reineggs alleges that in February 1785, from a great distance to the north-east, smoke and flames were seen to issue from Ararat, but nobody has believed his entirely unconfirmed assertion. No other volcano in these countries, or indeed in Western Asia at all, can be shown to have been active within time of human memory, although, as has been said already, there are hundreds of extinct volcanic chimneys between Constantinople and Afghanistan. It is only in hot springs, naphtha wells, sometimes in those bubbling pools of mud which are called

mud volcanoes, and which occur at both ends of the Caucasus, and now and then in a *solfatara*,[1] a hollow or crevice emitting vapours which deposit sulphur, and, above all, in earthquakes, that the presence of the terrible subterranean forces reveals itself.

One of the most remarkable features of Ararat is the surprising height of the line of perpetual snow. This, which in the Alps averages 8500 to 9000 feet, which in the Caucasus varies from 10,000 feet on the south-western to 12,000 feet on the northern slopes, rises here to nearly 14,000 feet.[2] It is, of course, different on different parts of the mountain; lower on the north-west, not only because the sun does not strike there with such force, but also because the slopes are more gentle. They descend, as I have said, in broad terraces, which are covered with glittering fields of unbroken *névé*, while on the steeper south-east declivity the snow appears chiefly in vast longitudinal beds, filling the depressions between the great rock ridges that run down the mountain, giving it, as Parrot has remarked, the appearance, from a distance, "of a beautiful pointed collar of dazzling white material on a dark ground." One at least of these rock ridges continues bare of snow to within a hundred feet of the summit, a fact which cannot be completely explained by their inclination, since it is not always too steep to permit snow to lie, nor even by the fact that they are mostly covered by loose volcanic blocks, off which

[1] Such a solfatara is said to exist among the mountains to the south-west of Little Ararat.

[2] One observer puts it as high as 14,200 feet: this seems to me a trifle too high.

snow melts more readily than from a smooth, solid surface; it is probably, therefore, to be also referred, as Abich suggests, to the decomposition of the minerals contained in the rock. The lowest point at which I noticed a permanent snow-bed on the exposed south-east side is about 12,000 feet above the sea; but in the deep dark valley on the north-east of the mountain, which is sometimes called the Great Chasm, sometimes the Valley of St. Jacob, from the little monastery aforesaid, the snow descends even lower. Here is to be found the only true glacier on the whole mountain, those glaciers of which the older travellers talk as seen on its upper sides being either mere beds of *névé* or, in one or two instances on the north-west slope, what are sometimes called glaciers of the second order. In the chasm, however, there is not merely an accumulation of masses of half melted ice that have fallen from the prodigious ice-wall that fringes the top of the cirque in which this chasm ends, but really a glacier, small and almost covered with blocks and stony rubbish, but with the genuine glacier structure, and united to the great snow mass of the mountain above by one or two snow-filled glens which run up from its head. It is nearly a mile long, and from 200 to 400 yards wide, with its lower end about 8000 feet, its upper nearly 10,000 feet above the sea-level, and bearing a *moraine*.

The great height of the snow-line on Ararat, which seems extraordinary when we compare it with the Alps or the Caucasus, which lie so little farther to the north—Ararat is in latitude 39° 42′, Elbruz in latitude

43° 21′, Mont Blanc in latitude 45° 50′—becomes easy of explanation when it is remembered how many causes besides distance from the equator govern the climate of any given spot. The most powerful influence in determining the point at which snow remains through the year is the rainfall. It is the greater moisture of the air that fixes the snow-line on the outer Himalaya, immediately north of the Bay of Bengal, at about 14,000 feet above the sea, while, as one advances north into Tibet, it rises steadily in the drier air, till it reaches 19,000 feet. So on the part of the Caucasus which looks towards the Black Sea, and receives the south-western rains coming thence, the snow-line is 2000 feet lower than on the colder, but far drier, north-eastern slopes. Now Ararat stands in an exceptionally dry region, whose rainfall is only 10 or 12 inches in the year:[1] there is, therefore, much less snow to fall than in the Alps. Besides, it is isolated, with only a small area of very great height, whereas Elbruz and Mont Blanc are surrounded by large snow masses little less elevated than themselves. The great Araxes plain, hemmed in on the north and east by bare and lofty mountains, which reflect, like the walls of a garden, every ray of light and heat, may be called a sort of huge bath or caldron filled with hot dry air, which is continually rising out of this caldron along the sides of Ararat and these other peaks, melting its snows and absorbing whatever moisture the storms of the higher regions have

[1] The annual rainfall at Aralykh is 6·08 inches; at Alexandropol, 90 miles to the north-west, 14·68 inches.

deposited on it. Hence it is that, while in winter the whole country, except the Aras valley below Erivan, is covered with a thick mantle of snow, this has in September melted off every exposed summit except Ararat himself, though upon some of the others, and especially on Ala Göz, it may still be discovered sheltering itself in northward-lying hollows.

The upward rush of air from the plain produces another phenomenon on Ararat which is the first thing to strike every observer. The top is generally, at least during the months of summer and autumn, perfectly clear during the night and till some time after dawn. By degrees, however, as the plains begin to feel the sun, their heated air mounts along the sides of the mountain, and, when it reaches the snow region, is condensed into vapour, and forms clouds. Springing out of a perfectly clear sky, usually about three or four hours after sunrise, these clouds hang round the hill till sunset, covering only the topmost 3000 feet, constantly shifting their places, but never quite disappearing, till sunset, when they usually vanish, the supply of hot air from below having stopped, and leave the peak standing out clear and sharp in the spotless blue. So it stands all night, till next morning brings the envious clouds again. The phenomenon is just the same as that which those who climb the Southern Alps, to gain a view over the plains of Italy, have so often noted and reviled; one sees it to perfection in Val Anzasca, where the south-east face of Monte Rosa is nearly always cloud-wrapped after 11 A.M. Here, however, it seems even

stranger, for the other mountains round the Araxes plain, being unsnowed, remain perfectly bare and clear; through the whole sky there is not a cloud except round this one snowy cone. It is a phenomenon which the explorer of Ararat has to lay his account with, and which makes it useless to hope for a perfect view, except in the early morning.

Although the snow-fields on the mountain are not very extensive, they are quite large enough to supply streams to water its sides; and the want of such streams is due to the porous character of the volcanic soil. At the height of about 13,000 feet, one finds plenty of lively little brooks dancing down over the rocks from the melting snows. But as they descend, they get lost in the wilderness of loose stones that strew the middle slopes of the mountain, and are only faintly heard murmuring in its deep recesses, mocking with sweet sounds the thirsty wayfarer. Towards the base these streams sometimes, though rarely, reappear in fountains, as they usually do in limestone countries; but they are then even more quickly swallowed up in the alluvial soil of mud and consolidated ash which, sloping gently eastwards, extends from the foot of the rocks to the bed of the Aras. Hence Ararat is painfully dry throughout; one finds it hard to imagine it dripping and steaming after a flood. Sometimes you see a gully whose torn sides and bottom strewed with rounded blocks show that in winter a torrent rushes down; but all autumn long you may wander round and round it, meeting scarcely a brook and rarely even a spring. This is strange

and dreary to a traveller accustomed to the mountains of Western Europe, all alive with streams, or even to one coming straight from the Caucasus. Nevertheless, the middle zone of Ararat is covered with good pasture, greener than on most of the Armenian mountains, for here the proximity of the snows moderates the temperature, and there is a reasonable dew-fall, besides the showers which the great mountain gathers. This middle zone extends from about 5000 feet above the sea to 11,000 or 12,000 feet. Below it, towards the valley of the Aras (I speak particularly of this north-eastern side, because it is the only one I know from personal observation), the lower declivities composed of whitish clay or sand, strewn here and there with lumps of grey or yellowish trachyte, are covered by a sort of steppe vegetation almost of the desert type—dwarf shrubs or bushes, often prickly, with few leaves and a much branching stem, some herbaceous flowering plants, and one or two grasses growing in stray tufts, especially *Dactylis littoralis*, on which a cochineal insect lives. Being utterly parched and quite without continuous herbage, this region is unprofitable, touched neither by plough nor spade, and without inhabitants. On the other hand, the upper slopes, from 11,000 or 12,000 feet upwards—the limit varies a little in different parts of the mountain—are bare of vegetation, except that a few of the hardiest species creep up to the snow-line: it is all loose gravel or bare rock, perfectly dry, and with nothing bigger than a lichen growing on it. Between these two regions of barrenness and solitude lies a

tract over which the nomad Kurds wander with their flocks and herds, seeking the upper pastures during the heat of summer, and in winter retreating before the snow to the edge of the steppe land. Here and there they have planted two or three little fields of wheat or barley, and by them built sorry grass-covered huts, but by far the greater number live entirely on the milk and flesh of their cattle, and, when the winter cold becomes too severe, migrate quite down into the valleys that surround the mountain, where, at least on Turkish soil, they often quarter themselves on the Armenian villagers. Their favourite summer camping grounds on the mountain are two, the high open plain which lies between Great and Little Ararat, 7000 to 8000 feet above the sea, whereof more anon, and the before-mentioned alpine plateau of Kip Ghöll, a comparatively level tract, where waters descending from the snow-beds above have formed a small lake or rather pond, about half an acre in size, and made an oasis of fine herbage at a height of nearly 12,000 feet. Enormous blocks of stone, which have fallen from the sides of the neighbouring extinct craters, lie around, and give good shelter: it is the pleasantest high station on Ararat, and the best from which to ascend the summit with tolerable comfort. Except these Kurds, a few Tatars at New Arghuri, where there is a little bit of cultivation, and possibly some casual Persian robbers straying upon the slopes, there is not a human being all over the vast area of the two mountains.

Not only this pastoral zone, but the whole moun-

tain, is, like Central Armenia generally, singularly bare of wood. Here and there a single tree, of no great height, may be discerned in sheltered situations, about 5000 or 6000 feet above the sea; but the only wood of any extent is on the skirts of Little Ararat, at a height of 7500 feet, and is composed of low birches. The Kurds cut it down for firewood, so perhaps it may be merely the relic of a much larger forest. No coniferous tree is to be seen anywhere; nor even an isolated birch at a greater height than 8000 feet. In the month of September, when I visited the mountain, everything is parched; the flowers which love the middle slopes have nearly all withered, and most even of the alpine plants have lost their petals. It is, therefore, an unfavourable time for botanizing; and as I passed over the best botanical region, between 8000 and 12,000 feet, in the darkness of the night both going and returning, there was little chance of observing or gathering rare species. Those which I saw mostly belonged to the same genera as the alpine plants of Europe; such as *Gentiana*, *Campanula*, *Saxifraga*, *Draba*, *Cerastium*. One Cerastium in particular ascends to an enormous height, fully 14,000 feet. On the whole, the flora, though interesting, seemed to be scanty. This is usually the case on volcanic mountains, partly because so large a part of their surface is covered by bare stones or rock, partly because they are so dry, partly, perhaps, owing to the presence of iron or sulphurous ingredients in the soil. The *Cryptogamia*, except lichens, are particularly poor, as always in a

dry air; very few mosses were to be seen, and no ferns, except two scrubby bits of our common English *Lastrea Filix mas.* In full summer the show of plants is doubtless finer, especially in the middle part of the mountain, where I passed for a mile through thickets of rose-bushes hanging on the steep sides of a rocky buttress.

Of wild creatures, other than human, there is no great variety, which is natural enough when one considers the want of wood and shelter, but is perhaps not what might have been looked for by those who hold that on this spot all the species of animals were once seen together, descending to disperse themselves over the globe. On the upper crags, the ibex, or wild goat (it is not quite clear which), as well as the wild sheep (*Ovis Musimon*), are found; and a small species of fox has been seen on the snows 15,000 feet above the sea. Lower down there are wolves and lynxes, and in the marshes of the Araxes abundance of wild swine. The botanist Tournefort says he saw tigers, but nobody has believed him; perhaps they were wild cats or leopards. The tiger is found on the south-west shore of the Caspian, round Lenkoran, but there is no evidence of it so far west as this. So far as my own observation goes, the mountain is very ill supplied with life: I saw no quadrupeds, scarcely any birds, except a few vultures and hawks, not many insects even. Of lizards and scorpions, there is great plenty on the lowest slope, but these, of course, belong rather to the fauna of the plains.

From what has been said already, the reader will

probably have gathered how utterly unlike Ararat is, not only in details, but even in general effect, to any great mountain in those ranges, such as the Alps or Pyrenees, with which we are most familiar. It is so dry, so bare and woodless, so generally uniform in its structure, having neither spurs running out nor glens running in, even the colours of its volcanic rock have so little variety, that a traveller, especially an artist, might think it unpicturesque and disappointing. Even of scenery of the sterner sort, precipices and rock gorges, there is not much to be seen on the mountain itself, save in the Great Chasm, whose head is surrounded by appalling cliffs, and on the upper south-eastern slope, where ranges of magnificent red crags run down from the summit. The noble thing about Ararat is not the parts but the whole. I know nothing so sublime as the general aspect of this huge yet graceful mass seen from the surrounding plains; no view which fills the beholder with a profounder sense of grandeur and space than that which is unfolded when, on climbing its lofty side, he sees the far-stretching slopes beneath, and the boundless waste of mountains beyond spread out under his eye. The very simplicity, or even monotony, of both form and colour increases its majesty. One's eye is not diverted by a variety of points of interest: all the lines lead straight up to the towering, snowy summit; which is steep enough on the upper part to be beautiful, while its broad-spread base and rocky buttresses give it a sort of stately solidity. The colour is as simple as the form. From a gently inclined pedestal

of generally whitish hue, formed, as has been said, of volcanic sand and ashes, the steep slopes rise in a belt of green 5000 feet wide; above this is another zone of black volcanic rock, streaked with snow beds; highest of all the cap of dazzling silver. At one glance the eye takes in all these zones of climate and vegetation from the sweltering plain to the icy pinnacle, ranging through more than 14,000 feet of vertical height. There can be but few other places in the world where so lofty a peak (17,000 feet) soars so suddenly from a plain so low, 2000 to 3000 feet above the sea, and consequently few views equally grand. The great summits of the Himalaya, like those of the Alps and the Atlas, rise from behind high spurs and outliers, at some distance from the level country; while the giants of the South American Cordilleras and of Mexico, all of them, like Ararat, volcanic, rise out of high plateaux, and therefore lose to the eye a good deal of their real height. Orizaba, for instance, though 17,000 feet high, stands on a base of 7000 feet in height; Chimborazo reaches 21,000 feet, but the plateau of Riobamba beneath it is nearly 10,000 feet above sea-level. The Peak of Teneriffe springs up out of the sea, but its height, 12,000 feet odd, falls considerably short of that of Ararat, and this seems to be true, also, of the lofty volcanoes along the coast of Northern Japan. Any one who is familiar with the Alps, which I take as best known to us, must have been surprised to notice how seldom he saw, near at hand, any single unbroken mountain slope of great vertical elevation. A few points one remem-

bers, such as Courmayeur, where nearly 12,000 feet of Mont Blanc are seen; or Val Anzasca, where, from a valley about 4000 feet above the sea, Monte Rosa ascends, in what the eye thinks a precipice, to 15,000; or Randa, below Zermatt, where the peak of the Weisshorn, 11,000 feet above the spectator, seems to hang over his head. These instances, however, are instances of a view from a valley, where other hardly inferior heights lie round; here in Armenia the mountain raises himself, solitary and solemn, out of a wide, sea-like plain.

The only exception, so far as I know, to the admiration which it has excited in the minds of the modern travellers who have seen it is supplied by the famous French botanist Tournefort (in the beginning of the eighteenth century), who says, "This mountain, which lies between the south and south-south-east of the Three Churches (the Tatar name for Etchmiadzin) is one of the most dismal and disagreeable sights on the face of the earth."[1] One wonders whether a time will again come when men of taste will think so differently from ourselves.

Ararat has, at present, another claim to importance, in which, so far as I know, it is singular among famous mountains. It is the meeting-point, the cornerstone, of three great empires. On the top of its lower peak, Little Ararat, the dominions of the Czar, the Sultan, and the Shah, the territories of the three chief forms of faith that possess Western and Northern Asia, converge to a point. From this point

[1] I quote this from Parrot.

the frontier between Persia and Turkey trends off to the south-south-west, while that of Turkey and Russia, running along the ridge that joins Little to Great Ararat, mounts the latter, keeps along its top in a north-west direction, and then turns west, along the watershed of volcanic mountains, Pambak and Synak, which divides the Russian province of Erivan, including the middle valley of the Aras, from the Turkish pashalik of Bayazid. This is no accident, nor has Ararat been taken as a boundary merely because it was a convenient natural division; it is rather a tribute to the political significance of the name and associations of the Mountain of the Ark. When in 1828 the Czar Nicholas, having defeated the Persians, annexed the territory round Erivan, his advisers insisted on bringing Ararat within the Russian border, on account of the veneration wherewith it is regarded by all the surrounding races, and which is reflected on the sovereign who possesses it. To the Armenians it is the ancient sanctuary of their faith, the centre of their once famous kingdom, hallowed by a thousand traditions. He who holds Ararat is therefore, in a sense, the suzerain of the most vigorous and progressive Christian people of the East. To the Mohammedans, Persians, Turks, Tatars, and Kurds, the mountain, though less sacred, is still an object of awe and wonder from its size, its aspect, and the general acceptance among them of the tale of the Flood. In these countries one still sees traces of that tendency, so conspicuous in the ancient world, but almost obliterated in modern Europe, for men of one

race and faith to be impressed by the traditions and superstitions of another faith, which they may even profess to disbelieve and hate. No Irish Protestant venerates the sacred island in Lough Derg; but here the fanatical Tatars respect, and the Persian rulers formerly honoured and protected, Etchmiadzin and many another Christian shrine; while Christians not unfrequently, both in the Caucasus and farther south through the eastern regions of Turkey, practise pagan or Mohammedan rites which they have learnt from their neighbours, and even betray their awe for the sacred places of Islam.

A remarkable result of this superstitious reverence for Ararat is to be found in the scarcely shaken persuasion of its inaccessibility. A Persian Shah is said to have offered a large reward to any one who should get up; but nobody claimed it. There is also a story told of a Turkish pasha at Bayazid who was fired with an ambition to make the ascent, and actually started with a retinue for the purpose. He meant however to do it on horseback, and in fact went no farther than his horse would carry him, which was of course a long way below the snow-line. The first recorded ascent was made, in A.D. 1829, by Dr. Frederick Parrot, a Russo-German professor in the university of Dorpat, whose name is attached to one of the pinnacles of Monte Rosa. He was beaten back twice, but on the third attempt reached the top with a party of three Armenians, and two Russian soldiers. The description he gives is perfectly clear and intelligible; and its accuracy has been in most

respects confirmed by subsequent observers. There is not, and ought never to have been, any more doubt about his ascent than about De Saussure's residence on the Col du Géant; and the enterprise, considering how little was then known about mountain climbing, the most modern of all our arts or sciences, and how much superstitious prejudice he had to overcome in order to persuade the natives to aid or accompany him, was not unworthy to be compared with that of the great Genevese. Nevertheless, in spite of the evidence he produced, that of two Russian soldiers who had gone with him, in spite of his own scientific attainments, and the upright and amiable character which shines through every line of his book, Parrot's account was disbelieved, not only by the people of the neighbourhood, but by several men of science and position in Russia and elsewhere, and he died before justice had been done to his success. Two of the Armenians whom he took with him to the summit, on being examined, declared that they had ascended a considerable distance but had seen much higher tops rising above them; and this became the conviction of the whole country-side. When Herr Abich made his ascent in 1845—it was the third, the second having been that of Spassky Aftonomof, who went up in 1834 in order to ascertain whether it was really true that the stars are visible at noon from the tops of the highest mountains—he reached the eastern summit, which is only a few feet inferior in height to the western, and six minutes' walk from it, and finding the weather threatening, returned without going on to

the western. The consequence was that, when, anxious to destroy the popular superstition, he produced his companions as witnesses before the authorities at Erivan, to make a regular deposition, they turned round on him, and solemnly declared and swore that from the point which they had reached a great part of the horizon was covered by much more lofty mountains. This of course actually strengthened the Armenian belief, nor did it yield to the fact that General Chodzko, while conducting the triangulation survey of Transcaucasia, reached the top with a large party, moving slowly upwards from August 11 to August 18, and stayed there three days in a tent pitched on the snow. A party of Englishmen who ascended in 1856, from the Turkish side, were assured by Turks and Kurds that the mountain was inaccessible, and considered themselves the first to climb it, evidently doubting both Parrot and Abich. And at this moment, I am persuaded that there is not a person living within sight of Ararat, unless possibly some exceptionally educated Russian official in Erivan, who believes that any human foot since Father Noah's has trodden that sacred summit. So much stronger is faith than sight; or rather, perhaps, so much stronger is prejudice than evidence.

As I have mentioned these ascents, a word or two may be said regarding the routes taken. Parrot had his head-quarters at the then existing monastery of St. Jacob, on the edge of the great chasm of Arghuri; he mounted from this to the west; encamped on the second occasion at Kip Ghöll, on the third and suc-

cessful one at a point somewhat higher than Kip Ghöll, just under the perpetual snows, and reached the summit by a long march over the terraces and generally gentle slopes of *névé*, which sink from it on the north-west side. This way is not to be recommended to a solitary climber, because the ice slopes are occasionally steep enough to require some step cutting—they repulsed Abich on his third attempt—and here and there a crevasse may be met with; however, a solitary ascent is not to be recommended in any case. But I believe it to be, on the whole, the easiest and least fatiguing route, and the best for a party. Notwithstanding which, it seems to have been only once followed since Parrot's time. Abich's fourth and successful ascent in 1845—he deserves scarcely less credit than Parrot for the tenacity with which he clung to his purpose under so many difficulties—was made up the south-eastern face from Sardarbulakh; and it was on this side that both Chodzko and the Englishmen of 1856 mounted. As I shall have to describe it in giving my own experiences, nothing more need be said of it here, further than to remark that it is probably the best route for a single man or a very small party, since it involves, at least in the autumn, very little snow work. No one seems to have climbed the south-western slope looking towards Bayazid and the alpine lake Balykh Ghöll; but Herr Abich, who has reconnoitred this side, told me in Tiflis that he believed it to be quite practicable. The chief advantage of the south-eastern route, besides the scantiness of snow, lies in the fact

that it is entirely in Russian territory, so that one need have less apprehension of robbers, and can use the Cossack station at Sardarbulakh (of which more anon) as a base of operations.

The last event of importance in the history of Ararat is the great earthquake of 1840. I have more than once spoken of the profound chasm which, on the north-east side of the mountain, over against Aralykh, runs right into its heart. This chasm ends in a sort of cirque hemmed in by tremendous walls of black or grey lavas and tuff conglomerates, capped by other precipices of ribbed blue ice, while at the bottom of the cleft, almost covered by masses of stone that have fallen from above, is to be found the only true glacier on the hill. Near the mouth of this chasm there formerly stood a pleasant little Armenian village of some two hundred houses, named Arghuri, or Aghurri, whose inhabitants, raised above the heats of the plain, and out of the track of war, had led a peaceful pastoral life for many generations, dwelling in the midst of their orchards and vines, feeding their flocks in the alpine pastures above them, and cultivating a few fields where the generally stony soil permitted the spade or plough to be used, and the stream from the glacier spread vegetation over the slopes. They boasted not only of the Patriarch's vine, bearing grapes delicious to eat, but which Heaven, in memory of the fault they betrayed him into, had forbidden to be made into wine; but also of an ancient willow trunk, which had sprung from one of the planks of the Ark. Not far above the village, on

the spot where the angel of the legend had appeared to the monk, stood the little monastery of St. Jacob, eight centuries old, and still higher was a tiny shrine beside a spring of bright clear water, the spring of the *tetagush* legend; while on the opposite side of the glen the Persian Sardar or viceroy had erected a sumptuous summer villa to which he was accustomed to retire from the scorching heats of Erivan. Setting apart the wandering Kurds, this was the only inhabited spot on the mountain, the place in which its traditions centred, and where they were faithfully preserved. Towards sunset in the evening of the 20th of June 1840 (old style), the sudden shock of an earthquake, accompanied by a subterranean roar, and followed by a terrific blast of wind, threw down the houses of Arghuri, and at the same moment detached enormous masses of rock with their superjacent ice from the cliffs that surround the chasm. A shower of falling rocks overwhelmed in an instant the village, the monastery, and a Kurdish encampment on the pastures above. Not a soul survived to tell the tale. Four days afterwards, the masses of snow and ice that had been precipitated into the glen suddenly melted, and, forming an irresistible torrent of water and mud, swept along the channel of the stream and down the outer slopes of the mountain, far away into the Aras plain, bearing with them huge blocks, and covering the ground for miles with a deep bed of mud and gravel. Even now, after thirty-seven years, the traces of this convulsion are distinctly visible; in some places the precipices from which the masses fell show

a fracture mark fresh as of yesterday. The direction of the shocks, which were felt as far as Tiflis, the Caspian, and the Lake of Urumia, was from the centre of Great Ararat, towards the north-east. It was reported in Europe at the time that Ararat had broken out in eruption; but for this story there is no foundation: the dust which accompanied the great rock fall was probably mistaken for smoke by those who saw it from a distance. Doubtless the blast was produced by the fall of the rock masses. Since then a few huts have again arisen somewhat lower down the slope than the site of Old Arghuri and without the mouth of the chasm; here dwell a few Tatars—for the Armenians (several, happening to be away from the village, escaped) do not seem to have returned to the desolated spot—and pasture their cattle on the sides of the valley which grass has again begun to clothe. But Noah's vine and the primeval willow, and the little monastery where Parrot lived so happily among the few old monks who had retired to this hallowed spot from the troubles of the world, are gone for ever; no Christian bell is heard, no Christian service said, upon the Mountain of the Ark.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASCENT OF ARARAT.

AT 8 A.M., on the morning of the 11th of September, we set out from Aralykh to ascend the mountain. We had arranged to start at sunrise, knowing how terrible the heat would be for the first part of the road, but to get a large party under way is always troublesome, and certainly not least so in these countries, where there is no sense of the value of time, and no conception of the conditions of a successful mountain expedition. Indeed, what with the collecting of the soldiers, the packing of provisions, the hundred little things that occur to one's mind at the last moment, a compass, snow spectacles, warm gloves, and, above all, the indispensable lemons, more than three hours would have been consumed had we been in any hands but those of our genial and energetic host. The last thing was to write a few lines home, wondering what the next lines would have to report, and then we filed out of the cantonment amid adieux and good wishes given in strange tongues. We were nine in all, six soldiers of the Cossack detachment, the gentleman who had undertaken to interpret, and our two selves. The soldier in command was a

Kurd named Jaafar, a man of great mental as well as bodily force, in whom the colonel reposed full confidence, and whose singularly keen and expressive glance made us wish that we could have held some direct communication with him. Remembering that on the same day of the year, five years ago, I had started to climb the Schreckhorn, and three years before, the Maladetta, it amused me to think how unlike this cavalcade of ours was to the parties of loud-voiced Englishmen and stalwart guides that issue from an Alpine inn before daylight to "do" some stimulating peak or pass. We were all mounted, though certainly on no fiery chargers, and might rather have been taken for a reconnoitring or marauding party, sent to plunder some village across the Persian border, which lay six miles off. The Cossacks were of course fully armed and equipped, while my friend and I, in addition to pistols stuck in the belt, brandished heavy ice-axes, the management of which, together with that of the bridle and a big white umbrella, required some dexterity. An umbrella and a horse do seem rather incompatible, not only with one another, but with a mountain ascent; but we would willingly have looked even more ridiculous for the sake of some protection against the fiery shower of beams that descended from the cloudless sky, and was reflected from the whitish wastes over which we took our way.

We were traversing, in a southerly direction, the outermost and extremely gentle slope of Ararat, a region of fine sand or hard yellowish clay, covered with dwarf, prickly, almost leafless bushes, but no

grass, and with no creatures save butterflies and lizards of every hue scuttling about. Each mile was like the last; the want of landmarks on the almost level expanse prevented us from noticing our progress; and the air was so clear that, when we had marched for three hours, the mass of the mountain seemed no nearer than it had done from Aralykh. Looking up the smooth and featureless slope, we had, of course, grossly underestimated the distance which separated us from the base of the cone. Such heat we had never felt before. Probably it was only the thrice blessed umbrellas that saved us from a sunstroke, since we had no better head protection than light felt wide-awakes, whereas the Cossacks cover their solid skulls with thick caps of sheepskin. Yet it was not an enervating heat: the air had that fresh stimulating quality which is said to make travelling in the Arabian desert so healthy; and the sight of the glittering peak above, which was now, like an Eastern beauty, beginning to draw over its face the noonday veil of cloud, seemed to shoot a thrill of coolness through our burning veins.

After a time the ground became rougher as we came to a region where winter torrents had cut deep gullies in the volcanic soil; the slope, too, grew steeper, and the air was fresher as we mounted, while a stray cloud or two, detached from the mountain, deigned us a passing shadow as it sailed across the blue. About noon we were fairly on the side of Ararat himself, and felt that every step was a gain. Here there projects from the body of the mountain, as a

glance at the frontispiece will show, a huge rounded, dome-shaped spur or buttress, 7091 feet in height, and evidently formed by eruptions from one or more volcanic vents rising through it: it is, in fact, one of the largest of the parasitic cones, or groups of cones, mentioned in the preceding chapter. Its name is Takjaltu, not to be confounded with another Takjaltu much farther to the north-west, in the upper Araxes valley. We made for the point where this mass joins Great Ararat, following a path which mounts between them, and crosses a succession of rocky ridges that descend steeply from the east side of the latter.

Pursuing our way along the hillside, we had to dip into more than one rocky ravine, but nowhere was there a stream at the bottom: everything dry as a chalk down in Sussex. This path brought us out on a little grassy plain, hemmed in by two of these ridges, and on the third or eastern side by the heights of Takjaltu, where to our surprise several tiny fields appeared, and one or two men and women at work in them, with a cluster of huts, built of stones and earth, standing near. Jaafar rode across to the men to inquire if any Kurds could be got to take our baggage up the mountain, on the backs of oxen, while we halted in the hope of a drink from the well that was said to be somewhere near. At last a man came, carrying a rude bowl, but as it was filled with liquid mud instead of water, we preferred thirst. The men were Kurds, and this was one of their few autumn or spring settlements on the mountain. As it lies 6000 feet

or more above the sea, they do not stay in it through the winter: at this season they were beginning to descend hither from the higher pastures. Remounting, we continued to coast round the mountain towards the south, scaling several more of the black rocky ridges that descend its flank, the path being in some places so steep and rugged that we were obliged to dismount and lead the horses. Among these rocks there grew rose-bushes enough to have inspired all the poets of Persia. They were pretty even in berry, but imagine what the scene must be in July, when the whole mountain-side is gay with these delicate pink blossoms, whereof I saw only one left now in September, and the sweet scent fills the keen mountain air. On rounding the last ridge, the conical peak of Little Ararat came in view, its base about two miles distant, across an open slope, and just beneath us, nestling under the ridge, was a Kurdish encampment. Four or five tents stood side by side on the greensward, supported on low poles or stakes, and covered with curtains of black goat's hair, the ends loosely fastened to the tops of these stakes, and the centre raised on cross poles. The walls, if one can call them so, are formed of matting or plaited reeds, and a similar strip of reeds, with sometimes a rug or a piece of cloth thrown over it, runs along between, and purports to divide the women's apartment in each tent from that of the men. It is more for the sake of form than to secure privacy, for every corner of the establishment is clearly visible to a person standing outside. To slake our thirst, they brought us bowls of sourish

milk mixed with water, a frequent drink in these countries, and we found it refreshing, if less palatable than the fresh milk of a Swiss *châlet.*

Five minutes' more riding up the grassy slope brought us to the spot for which we had so often, and latterly, time drawing on, so anxiously, enquired, the well of Sardarbulakh. As the only high permanent camping-ground on the mountain, and the place which will be chosen for an alpine hotel, if such a thing ever comes into existence on Ararat, Sardarbulakh is entitled to a few words of description.[1] It stands nearly in the middle of a wide semicircular valley, or rather a sloping plain, between the two Ararats. Towards Great Ararat, which bears about west, the ground rises, at first gently, then steeply, in a series of rocky ridges of nearly equal height, separated by long, narrow hollows, and mostly running nearly west-north-west and east-south-east. About five miles, as the crow flies, from this plain these ridges merge in the great cone, whose summit may be some six or seven miles from Sardarbulakh in a straight line through the air, though more than twice that distance to walk.

On the opposite or south-south-east side of this small plain, Little Ararat springs up 5000 feet, in an almost perfect truncated pyramid, with steep, smooth sides, grassy, except where they are seamed by deep cuts, running from top to bottom, into the sand and gravel with which those smooth sides are covered. Its

[1] Sardarbulakh does not appear in the view, as it lies back, just behind the top of the buttress which shows between the two Ararats.

base may be two, its top about four, miles distant in a straight line drawn along the earth. If Great Ararat is the most majestic, Little Ararat may claim to be the most elegant of mountains; the eye is never tired of its beautiful lines. The two peaks are connected by a rough-topped ridge which forms the back of the sloping plain I have described, and also marks the frontier between the Russian and Turkish empires. Over it is the path to Bayazid,[1] distant some nineteen miles to the south-west, while five miles to the east, on the north-eastern side of Little Ararat, one enters the territories of the Shah. The place is therefore particularly well suited for predatory operations, since, when the marauders are attacked on any one of the three soils, they can promptly retire into one of the other two, and snap their fingers at justice, just as evil-doers in England used to be fond of establishing themselves on the boundary between two counties, where they could slip away from the sheriff of either. Hence Russia, who cares more about the security of the subject than her neighbours do, has placed here a sort of small frontier guard, consisting of seven or eight armed Cossacks, who remind the mountain

[1] Bayazid, a decaying town with a half ruinous citadel, was the first Turkish fortress which the Russians captured in the present war. They approached it from the east, through Persian territory, as the snow was then (early in May) too deep both on the pass between the Ararats, and the other passes west of Great Ararat which lead to it, to permit the passage of an army. As everybody knows, the garrison they placed there was surrounded by a large Turkish force, consisting mainly of Kurds, who butchered a great part of this garrison, while it actually was surrendering under an agreement, and beleaguered the few who saved themselves in the citadel till they were relieved by General Tergukasof.

Kurds of the existence of the Czar, and keep an eye on the border depredators, who, lurking about in Persia or Turkey, now and then swoop down on the Aras valley for a little booty. Before 1828, when Persia still held all of what is now the Russian side of Ararat, this plain of Sardarbulakh was a regular stronghold of the robber Kurds, who not only spoiled and murdered travellers attempting to pass this way to Bayazid, but constantly plundered the villages of the plain and the two highways of commerce which pass along the two sides of the mountain, one of them from Tiflis and Erivan to Tavriz, the other from Trebizond and Erzerum to the same place. Now all is changed. The Kurds recognize the Czar as a power that makes for righteousness: they probably regret the good old times, but so long as they are on this side the mountain, they spare the Armenian peasant and the traveller, well knowing that on the other side they may play what pranks they please.

The height above the sea of this sloping plain varies from 8818 feet, which is given as the height of the pass leading to Bayazid, and 7000 feet; and Sardarbulakh in the middle is 7514 feet. Its lumpy volcanic hillocks—I have called it a plain, but it is far from being level—are covered with good grass; and about a mile off, near the foot of Little Ararat, appears the only bit of wood on the whole mountain—a grove of low birches, whose dimensions the wasteful Kurds are rapidly reducing. Near the birch trees is a sort of subterranean village, huts formed by hollowing out the ground and laying a few boughs, covered with

turf, across the top, through which comes such light as can penetrate. These huts are often uninhabited: I I fancy it is mostly when cold weather comes on that the Kurds take to them. There is a tale told that they were once an Armenian village, inhabited by people whom the Sardar had transported hither, but who forsook the place when his power ended. Sardar, or Sirdar, a name with which Anglo-Indians are familiar, means general or governor, and was the title of the Persian governor of Erivan. Sardar-bulakh is therefore translated as the Sardar's well. It is, of course, the presence of drinkable water that has made the Kurds and Cossacks fix themselves here, for (as has been said already) there is no other constant spring nearer than the valley of Arguri, four hours' journey. Probably some Persian viceroy may have stationed a garrison here in the old days when they carried on constant wars with the Turk. A pleasanter frontier post to be sent to out of the hot valley of the Aras could not be imagined; exquisitely keen fresh air, noble prospects over the plains and mountains to the east, and a superb peak on either hand. It is just the place which those who love the Riffel or the Aeggischhorn would enjoy. However, we thought little more of these charms than probably the Persian officers did long ago, when they grumbled at being banished from the luxuries of the city, for it was two o'clock, and we were still many hours from the base of the cone. Every one who had spoken to us about the ascent had wound up with the same advice: "Whatever chance of success you have"—only one

of our informants (Mr. Scharoyan, in Tiflis, who ascended with General Chodzko) thought we had any—"depends on your sleeping very high up, close to the snows, and starting before dawn to try the main peak." Knowing that we were out of training, and that, as we should have to find our own way up, plenty of time would be needed, we recognized the force of this advice, and were most anxious to get to the foot of the cone, a point 11,000 feet high, by nightfall. To push straight on was impossible, for horses could go no farther, and the Cossacks absolutely refused to carry even the few things we needed for a bivouac: it was therefore necessary to procure Kurds for the purpose, and that was a slow business. Minutes and half-hours slipped away while they were being found and brought to Jaafar, who had been charged by the colonel with the arrangements for our expedition. When they came, the bargaining began, and that seemed interminable. We knew nothing of what was going on, for even with Jaafar, who spoke Russian, we could not communicate directly, and were, of course, one remove further from the Kurds, whose tongue the companion who was interpreting did not understand.

It is always vexatious to be checked by difficulties and delays of merely human origin in a mountain expedition; and here we were in full sight of our goal, the glorious snows seeming to beckon us on, while the minutes which might make all the difference to success were being wasted in wranglings we could not abridge or even understand. Once or twice we struck

in to urge that, at all hazards and whatever the cost, a start should be made; but to little purpose, for the Kurds, like true children of nature, found difficulties in every course proposed, and were, so far as I could make out, not so much pleased by the prospect of earning what to them was a fortune as anxious to improve the occasion by squeezing out more. Perhaps the idea of working at all was distasteful to them: one generally finds in wild and simple people a greater disposition to prefer their inclination to their interests, and in particular more disinclination to earn money by doing anything they are not accustomed to, than in civilized man. Jaafar's plan had been to send our baggage on the backs of Kurdish oxen as far up as a place which they call the Hermitage, where, however, there is no anchorite's cell, but only a grassy hollow among the rocks with sometimes a little water, and let us either sleep there, 2000 feet higher than Sardarbulakh, or else, leaving the animals there, get on as much farther as we could before nightfall.

But these discussions had now brought us to half past four o'clock. At least half an hour more would be consumed in packing and preparations for departure. There would then remain little more than an hour's daylight to reach a higher camping ground, where, of course, we should have much less chance of sleep than here below in the tent which the Cossacks had vacated for us. Yielding, therefore, most unwillingly to circumstances, and believing that we were practically abandoning our chances for the morrow, I suggested that we should remain and sleep at Sardarbulakh,

and make a start upwards as soon as the moon rose, shortly after midnight. This idea, like anything which delayed a move, was accepted. Jaafar engaged four Kurds to go with us and carry what baggage we had, some wrappings to sleep in, and a little food—it would have been a load for one Swiss porter and a half—and told off no less than seven Cossacks to act as a guard, not merely a guard of honour, it seemed, but an actual guard to defend us against these four ferocious Kurds, who looked to me wild indeed, but by no means terrible. However, so it was settled. Whether, having really no say in the matter, we ventured to suggest that seven Cossacks were not needed, I hardly remember, but believe we were told that the Cossacks refused to go at all unless they were allowed to go in that number. The terrors of the mountain and the Kurds would have been too great for a smaller detachment.

While all this was going on, there was another scene in progress which served to appease our impatience. The two Cossack tents stood on a grassy slope, about forty yards above the well which gives its name to the place; and to this well there now came, driving their flocks before them, another band of Kurds, who had just crossed the flanks of Little Ararat from Persia in search of fresher pasture. The well is an elliptical hollow, about ten feet long by five broad, surrounded by a sort of rude, loose wall of lumps of lava, with the water in it, when we first saw it, about three feet deep. One could see where the spring rose into it from under the wall, sweet, clear, and cool. As the water lay too

deep sunk for cattle to reach it, troughs were set up all over the pasture round; Kurdish boys and girls brought brazen bowls and carried the water in these to fill the troughs, whence the patient creatures drank. The sheep, whose bleatings filled the air, were mostly either light brown, or black, or white, not much larger than those of the Scotch Highlands; the goats, however, were thoroughly Oriental, mostly white, with long, soft hair, and large, pendant ears, just like the scapegoat of Mr. Holman Hunt's picture. For nearly two hours the process of watering went on, boys and girls and women coming and going round the well, and ladleing out the water till hardly any was left in the bottom, permitting us sometimes to help them, but scarcely looking at the strangers from Frangistan, so incurious were they, or so intent on the work of the hour. All were wonderfully hardy and sinewy, the women mostly scorched and withered, but the girls' and boys' faces pretty and full-coloured, the carriage of all perfectly graceful. The men, of whom there were but few, wore a sort of coat coming nearly to the knee, sometimes woollen and striped, sometimes, oddly enough, of a coarsely printed chintz, with trousers that reached well below the knee, leaving the lower part of the leg to be covered by wrappings and the strings of the shoe or sandal. Every one was armed with a knife or sword, at least, sometimes huge old pistols, sometimes a musket or matchlock besides. On the head was a woollen cap, having strips of silk or cotton cloth wound round it to form a rude kind of turban. The women's dress was rather brighter in colours, and

their striped or embroidered short petticoats, below which cotton drawers descended to the ankle, were extremely pretty; the cap was generally of scarlet cloth; in their nostrils and ears jewels were hung, while round their necks they bore a profusion of ornaments, strings of gold and silver coins and beads, and coloured stones; even the bareheaded girls, whose plaited locks fell over the shoulders, had always such a necklace. Unlike their Mohammedan sisters of the plains, their faces were unshielded by a veil, and they showed no shyness or timidity in the presence of the Cossacks and ourselves. Each, like the Fates in Catullus, bore a distaff in one hand, with a lump of wool upon her wrist, and this they plied as they drove the flocks before them.

So picturesque a scene, or one that brought so vividly to mind the first simple life of the world, unchanged in these earliest seats of mankind, we had never seen before. In the foreground were the beautiful flocks, the exquisite colours of the women's dresses and ornaments, their own graceful figures, the stir and movement beside the clear pool, the expanse of rolling pasture around with its patch of tender little birchwood. On each side a towering cone rose into heaven, while in front the mountain slope swept down into the broad valley of the Aras, and beyond stern red mountains ranged away, ridge over ridge, to the eastern horizon, all bare and parched, with every peak and gully standing sharp out through the clear air, yet softened by distance into the most delicately rich and tender hues. Here, where a picture of primi-

tive life close at hand was combined with a vision of broad countries, inhabited by many peoples, stretching out to the shores of the inland sea of Asia, one seemed at a glance to take in and realize their character and history, unchanging in the midst of change. Through the empires of Assyria and Persia, and Macedon, through Parthian Arsacidæ, and Iranian Sassanidæ, through the reigns of Arabian Khalifs, and Turkish Sultans, and Persian Shahs, these Kurds have roamed as they roam now, over the slopes of the everlasting mountains, watering their flocks at this spring, pitching their goat's hair tents in the recesses of these lonely rocks, chanting their wildly pathetic airs, with neither a past to remember nor a future to plan for.

When our plans for the ascent had been settled there was just time left for a stroll up the slope towards the pass leading to Bayazid. I scrutinised the south-east face of the great cone, which looked in the marvellously clear air much nearer than it turned out to be, and sketched out mentally a line of attack for the morrow. Clouds still clinging to the summit made it difficult to say whether there might not be impracticable precipices in the upper part. There was, of course, no light to be had from either Kurds or Cossacks: the former never go higher than the limits of pasture, and the latter have no motive to go nearly so high. One could therefore only rely on the general structure of the ridges, which seemed to promise a route either up the edges of the snow-beds or along the rocky crests that rose between them. Returning at sunset to the tent, we found some

Cossacks sent out to meet us by the watchful Jaafar, who feared we might be picked off by stray marauders, and looked rather reproachfully at us for having gone forth alone. It was very odd; I suppose now that there really may have been a risk, but the habit of security was so strong that, in gazing about on those silent slopes, we could no more expect robbers than we should have done on the Wengern Alp.

Supper was prepared, the Cossacks cooking theirs and ours in a big pot over a fire kindled on the hill-side, which lit up their figures and the still more picturesque figures of the Kurds, who crouched round it just like the brigands in an opera scene. The Russian has a turn for cooking; the Cossack, though his taste may be less refined, rivals the Zouave in the power of getting on in a bivouac. After the meal, which consisted of boiled mutton and milk, both procured from the Kurds, we had some of the unfailing tea, and lay down for a little sleep. Four years before we had shared a tent under the snowstorms of Iceland, an experience which somewhat diminished the romantic pleasure young travellers find in life under canvas. Here, to be sure, we were twenty-five degrees nearer the equator; but then we were 7500 feet above the sea, with a breeze shaking the tent walls and forcing us to cover down their bottom, piling up stones and hay outside, and to turn every shred of clothing into account. One feels little inclined for sleep on these occasions; we stayed long outside watching the Cossacks and the stars, by whose light it was just possible to make out the lines of Little

Ararat in front. The silence of the mountain was astonishing. No calling of torrents to one another, such as one hears in the Alps, no rippling of rills or rustling of boughs, not even the noise of a falling stone, only the whistling of the west wind, the home wind, over the pass. About nine we crept into the tent and fell asleep. Waking at midnight, which was lucky, for the rest were deep in slumber, we roused them by degrees, and packed up what we needed, while they gathered the food and the rugs as well as they could in the darkness, making four bundles, one for each Kurd. The moon had risen over the Karabagh mountains beyond Aralykh, but she was so far gone in waning that there was only sufficient light to see a yard or two around you.

About 1 A.M. we got off, thirteen in all, and made straight across the grassy hollows for the ridges which trend up towards the great cone, running parallel in a west-north-westerly direction, and enclosing between them several long narrow depressions hardly deep enough to be called valleys. The Kurds led the way, and at first we made pretty good progress. The Cossacks seemed fair walkers, though less stalwart than the Kurds; the pace generally was better than that with which Swiss guides start. However, we were soon cruelly undeceived. In twenty-five minutes there came a steep bit, and at the top of it they flung themselves down on the grass to rest. So did we all. Less than half a mile farther, down they dropped again, and this time we were obliged to give the signal for resuming the march. In another

quarter of an hour they were down once more, and so it continued for the rest of the way. Every ten minutes' walking—it was seldom steep enough to be called actual climbing—was followed by seven or eight minutes of sitting still, smoking and chattering. How they did chatter! It was to no purpose that we continued to move on when they sat down, or that we rose to go before they had sufficiently rested. They looked at one another, so far as I could make out by the faint light, and occasionally they laughed; but they would not and did not stir till such time as pleased themselves. We were helpless. Impossible to go on alone; impossible also to explain to them why every moment was precious, for the acquaintance who had acted as interpreter had been obliged to stay behind at Sardarbulakh, and we were absolutely without means of communication with our companions. One could not even be angry, had there been any use in that, for they were perfectly good-humoured. It was all very well to beckon them, or pull them by the elbow, or clap them on the back; they thought this was only our fun, and sat still and chattered all the same. When it grew light enough to see the hands of a watch, and mark how the hours advanced while the party did not, we began for a second time to despair of success.

I can say very little about the ground we traversed in the darkness, except that it was quite waterless, and that I fancy we passed, in a grassy hollow at about 9000 feet above the sea, the spot which they call the Hermitage, which seems to be the site of

General Chodzko's meteorological camp of July and August 1850. He told me there was a spring there, but either it is dry at this season or else we missed it. There was pasture in many places, but we saw no cattle; doubtless they had already been driven down to the lower slopes. What we were able to remark and enjoy was the changing aspect of the sky. About 3 A.M. there suddenly sprang up, from behind the Median mountains, the morning star, shedding a light such as no star ever gave in these northern climes of ours, a light that almost outshone the moon. An hour later it began to pale in the first faint flush of yellowish light that spread over the eastern heaven, and first the rocky masses above us, then Little Ararat, throwing behind him a gigantic shadow, then the long lines of mountains beyond the Araxes, became revealed, while the wide Araxes plain still lay dim and shadowy below. One by one the stars died out as the yellow turned to a deeper glow that shot forth in long streamers, the rosy fingers of the dawn, from the horizon to the zenith. Cold and ghostly lay the snows on the mighty cone; till at last there came upon their topmost slope, 6000 feet above us, a sudden blush of pink. Swiftly it floated down the eastern face, and touched and kindled the rocks just above us. Then the sun flamed out, and in a moment the Araxes valley and all the hollows of the savage ridges we were crossing were flooded with overpowering light.

It was nearly six o'clock, and progress became easier now that we could see our way distinctly. The

Cossacks seemed to grow lazier, halting as often as before and walking less briskly; in fact, they did not relish the exceeding roughness of the jagged lava ridges along whose tops or sides we toiled. I could willingly have lingered here myself, for in the hollows, wherever a little soil appeared, some interesting plants were growing, whose similarity to and difference from the alpine species of Western Europe alike excited one's curiosity. Time allowed me to secure only a few; I trusted to get more on the way back, but this turned out to be impossible. As we scrambled along a ridge above a long narrow winding glen filled with loose blocks, one of the Kurds suddenly swooped down, like a vulture, from the height on a spot at the bottom, and began peering and grubbing among the stones. In a minute or two he cried out, and the rest followed: he had found a spring, and by scraping in the gravel had made a tiny basin out of which we could manage to drink a little. Here was a fresh cause of delay; everybody was thirsty, and everybody must drink, not only the water which, as we afterwards saw, trickled down hither under the stones from a snow-bed 700 feet higher, but the water mixed with some whisky from a flask my friend carried, which even in this highly diluted state the Cossacks took to heartily. When at last we got them up and away again, they began to dawdle and straggle; after a while two or three sat down, and plainly gave us to see they would go no farther. By the time we had reached a little snow-bed whence the now strong sun was drawing a stream of water, and halted on the rocks beside it for breakfast,

there were only two Cossacks and the four Kurds left with us, the rest having scattered themselves about somewhere lower down. We had no idea what instructions they had received, nor whether indeed they had been told anything except to bring us as far as they could, to see that the Kurds brought the baggage, and to fetch us back again, which last was essential for Jaafar's peace of mind. We concluded therefore that, if left to themselves, they would probably wait our return, and the day was running on so fast that it was clear there was no more time to be lost in trying to drag them along with us.

Accordingly I resolved to take what I wanted in the way of food, and start at my own pace. My friend, who carried more weight, and had felt the want of training on our way up, decided to come no farther, but wait about here, and look out for me towards nightfall. We noted the landmarks carefully, the little snow-bed, the head of the glen covered with reddish masses of stone and gravel, and high above it, standing out of the face of the great cone of Ararat, a bold peak, or rather projecting tooth of black rock, which our Cossacks called the Monastery, and which, I supposed from the same fancied resemblance to a building, is said to be called in Tatar Tach Kilissa, "the church rock." It is doubtless an old cone of eruption, about 13,000 feet in height, and is really the upper end of the long ridge we had been following, which may, perhaps, represent a lava flow from it, or the edge of a fissure which at this point found a vent. In the frontispiece it will

be seen as a black projection from the south-east ridge of the cone. We were now at a height of about 12,000 feet. Everything lay below us, except Little Ararat opposite, and the stupendous cone that rose from where we sat, its glittering snows and stern black crags of lava standing up perfectly clear in a sea of cloudless blue. Tempting it was, but it was also awe-inspiring, and as the summit was hidden behind the nearer slopes, I could not tell what the difficulties of the ascent might be. Still less could we have learnt them from our companions. The Kurds never come higher on the mountain than their flocks can find pasture, and on this side at least the pasture does not reach so high as where we were. Moreover, they have a superstitious reverence for the mountain, scarcely less than that of the Armenians: only, while the Armenian faithful believe it to be guarded by angels, the Kurds hold it to be the favourite haunt of devils and Jinn, who are ready to take vengeance on the disturber of their revels. The shepherds, therefore, avoid the heights as much as possible. This, however, was neither here nor there; for had they known never so much, they could not have given us the benefit of what they knew.

It was an odd position to be in: guides of two different races, unable to communicate either with us or with one another, guides who could not lead and would not follow, guides one-half of whom were supposed to be there to save us from being robbed and murdered by the other half, but all of whom, I am bound to say, looked for the moment equally

simple and friendly, the swarthy Iranian as well as the blue-eyed Slav.

At eight o'clock I buckled on my canvas gaiters, thrust some crusts of bread, a lemon, a small flask of cold tea, four hard-boiled eggs, and a few meat lozenges into my pocket, bade good-bye to my friend, and set off. Rather to our surprise, the two Cossacks and one of the Kurds came with me, whether persuaded by a pantomime of encouraging signs, or simply curious to see what would happen. The ice-axe had hugely amused the Cossacks all through. Climbing the ridge to the left, and keeping along its top for a little way, I then struck across the semicircular head of a wide glen, in the middle of which, a little lower, lay a snow-bed, over a long steep slope of loose broken stones and sand. This slope, a sort of talus or "screes," as they say in the Lake country, was excessively fatiguing from the want of firm foothold, and when I reached the other side, I was already so tired and breathless, having been on foot since midnight, that it seemed almost useless to persevere farther. However, on the other side, I got upon solid rock, where the walking was better, and was soon environed by a multitude of rills bubbling down over the stones from the snow-slopes above. The summit of Little Ararat, which had for the last two hours provokingly kept at the same apparent height above me, began to sink, and before ten o'clock I could look down upon its small flat top, studded with lumps of rock, but bearing no trace of a crater. Mounting steadily along the same ridge, I saw at a height of over 13,000 feet, lying on the loose

blocks, a piece of wood about four feet long and five inches thick, evidently cut by some tool, and so far above the limit of trees that it could by no possibility be a natural fragment of one. Darting on it with a glee that astonished the Cossack and the Kurd, I held it up to them, made them look at it, and repeated several times the word "Noah." The Cossack grinned, but he was such a cheery, genial fellow that I think he would have grinned whatever I had said, and I cannot be sure that he took my meaning, and recognised the wood as a fragment of the true Ark. Whether it was really gopher wood, of which material the Ark was built, I will not undertake to say, but am willing to submit to the inspection of the curious the bit which I cut off with my ice-axe and brought away. Anyhow, it will be hard to prove that it is not gopher wood. And if there be any remains of the Ark on Ararat at all—a point as to which the natives are perfectly clear—here rather than the top is the place where one might expect to find them, since in the course of ages they would get carried down by the onward movement of the snow-beds along the declivities. This wood, therefore, suits all the requirements of the case. In fact, the argument is, for the case of a relic, exceptionally strong: the Crusaders who found the Holy Lance at Antioch, the archbishop who recognized the Holy Coat at Treves, not to speak of many others, proceeded upon slighter evidence. I am, however, bound to admit that another explanation of the presence of this piece of timber on the rocks at this vast height did occur to me. But as no man is bound to dis-

credit his own relic, and such is certainly not the practice of the Armenian Church, I will not disturb my readers' minds, or yield to the rationalizing tendencies of the age by suggesting it.

Fearing that the ridge by which we were mounting would become too precipitous higher up, I turned off to the left, and crossed a long, narrow snow-slope, that descended between this ridge and another line of rocks more to the west. It was firm, and just steep enough to make steps cut in the snow comfortable, though not necessary; so the ice-axe was brought into use. The Cossack who accompanied me—there was but one now, for the other Cossack had gone away to the right some time before, and was quite lost to view—had brought my friend's alpenstock, and was developing a considerable capacity for wielding it. He followed nimbly across; but the Kurd stopped on the edge of the snow, and stood peering and hesitating, like one who shivers on the plank at a bathing-place, nor could the jeering cries of the Cossack induce him to venture on the treacherous surface. Meanwhile, we who had crossed were examining the broken cliff which rose above us. It looked not exactly dangerous, but a little troublesome, as if it might want some care to get over or through. So, after a short rest, I stood up, touched my Cossack's arm, and pointed upwards. He reconnoitred the cliff with his eye, and shook his head. Then, with various gestures of hopefulness, I clapped him on the back, and made as though to pull him along. He looked at the rocks again, and pointed to them, stroked his knees, turned up and pointed to

the soles of his boots, which certainly were suffering from the lava, and once more solemnly shook his head. This was conclusive; so I conveyed to him by pantomime that he had better go back to the bivouac where my friend was, rather than remain here alone, and that I hoped to meet him there in the evening, took an affectionate farewell, and turned towards the rocks. There was evidently nothing for it but to go on alone. It was half-past ten o'clock, and the height about 13,600 feet, Little Ararat now lying nearly 1000 feet below the eye.

I am no disciple of that doctrine of mountaineering without guides which some English climbers have of late preached zealously by example as well as precept, and which others, among them so high an authority as my friend Mr. Leslie Stephen, have wisely set themselves to discourage. But if there is any justification for the practice, that justification exists when guides are not to be had. Here not only had the Cossack and the Kurd refused to come on, but they really could not have been of use if they had. They were not guides in any sense of the word; they were an escort. They had never been so high in their lives before, knew nothing either of climbing in general or of this particular mountain, were not properly equipped for the work. In fact, their presence could have been no gain in any way, except that, if one of us had hurt himself on the rocks, the other two might have carried him down or taken news to the party below. There was no ground for complaining of them, seeing that the mountain was terrible not only by its legends, but

by its solitude and silence; and the idea of going to the top for the sake of getting to the top would have been quite incomprehensible to them. What had happened was so obviously what might have been, and indeed had been, expected, that it would have been folly for a man to come so far unless he was now prepared to proceed alone. The weather looked pretty steady, although clouds were gathering round the top, and there seemed to be so little snow on this side that the usual risks of solitary mountaineering were absent, and a single climber would be just as well able to get along as a party. Convincing myself by these reasonings that there was nothing rash in proceeding, I fell to work upon the trachytic crags in front, but found them so nasty that it soon became necessary to turn off to the left (west). There I emerged on a very long, straight slope of volcanic stones, fragments of trachyte, basalt, amygdaloid, and so forth, lying at so high an angle (probably over 33 degrees) that they were often rolling down of themselves, and always gave way under the foot and hand, so that I slipped down nearly as much as I went up. It was nearly two hours' incessant toil up this bit of "screes," owing partly to its nature, but chiefly to the state of fatigue and breathlessness in which I found myself, and which was no doubt due to the thinness of the air. Having never before experienced, even on the top of Monte Rosa, any of the discomforts ascribed to this cause, I had fancied that my present sensations, which had begun in crossing the first slope of stones at a height of only 12,300 feet, were caused

simply by want of training and of sleep. Now, however, when between every two steps one had to stop and gasp for breath, it was plain that the rarity of the air must be the real cause, though there was no headache, nausea, gushing of blood from the nose and ears, nor any other of those symptoms of mountain sickness on which the older travellers dilate. Oddly enough, it grew no worse as I mounted; in fact, was felt rather less at 17,000 feet than at 13,000. Why this was so, or why I should have felt it so low on Ararat at all, I cannot explain: the phenomena of the subject are odd altogether, and seem to deserve more study than they have received. In the Alps, for instance, there are said to be mountains, such as Mont Blanc, where these sensations are experienced far more frequently than on other hills at the same height. Doubtless there is a good deal of difference between one man's susceptibility and another's, and even between the same man's states at different times; but there seem to be also further differences in the mountains themselves which it would be interesting to examine.

The practical question at this moment was whether with knees of lead, and gasping like a fish in a boat, I should be able to get any farther. Another element of difficulty was added by the clouds, which had now established themselves, as they usually do at this hour, a good way down from the top, and might prevent me from finding it, or at least beguile me into a wrong track, which there would not be time to retrace so as to reach the desired goal. I had not seen the

summit that morning, and was obliged to guess at its whereabouts from the direction of the ridges running up the face of the cone (I say "cone" for convenience, though it is really more a dome than a cone, and is so huge that in climbing the sides you do not think of it as a cone at all). With these grounds for reflection I sat down to eat an egg and take stock of the position. The conclusion was that, whenever a "bad place" presented itself, or three o'clock arrived, it would be prudent, indeed necessary, to turn back were the top never so near. "Bad places" are more serious things when one is alone, especially in descending, not so much because you lose the help of a companion as because they are more likely to affect the nerves and oblige the climber to proceed with more deliberation. In this case, moreover, time was everything, because the place of bivouac must be reached by 6 P.M., after which there would be no light fit for walking, and a night without food or wrappings in the open air, even at 12,000 feet, might have had permanently disagreeable results. In coming to this decision, there was a sense of relief; and both lungs and legs were so exhausted that the bad place, or three o'clock, would have been almost welcome.

This repulsive stone slope abuts at its upper extremity upon a line of magnificent black cliff, from which there were hanging several glittering icicles, 200 feet long, frozen waterfalls in fact, produced by the melting of the snow on a snow slope behind. Before reaching this, I had grown so weary of the loose stones, up which it was difficult to advance except

by a succession of spurts with the aid of hands and ice-axe, as to turn still farther to the left, and get on to another rock-rib, composed of toppling crags of lava, along whose farther or western side, the *arête* itself being too much broken, it was possible to work one's laborious way over the fallen masses. Here a grand sight, perhaps the grandest on the whole mountain, presented itself. At my foot was a deep, narrow, impassable gully, a sort of gigantic *couloir*, in whose bottom snow lay where the inclination was not too steep. Beyond it a line of rocky towers, red, grim, and terrible, ran right up towards the summit, its upper end lost in the clouds, through which, as at intervals they broke or shifted, one could descry, far, far above, a wilderness of snow. Had a Kurd ever wandered so far, he might have taken this for the palace of the Jinn.

This gully is, no doubt, one of those ancient volcanic fissures with which the mountain is seamed, and from which great part of its lava has been discharged. The same phenomenon appears in most volcanic regions: in Iceland, for instance, tremendous eruptions have taken place from similar rifts or *gjás*, as they are called there, opening on the sides or even at the base of a mountain. This particular fissure, which runs north-west and south-east, is on the main the axis of the mass, midway between the craters of Kip Ghöll on the north-west and Little Ararat on the south-east, and indicates the line along which the volcanic forces acted most powerfully. Following its course towards the base of the cone, I could see that

line prolonged in a series of small cones and craters along the top of the ridge which connects Great and Little Ararat. Some of those craters, into which I looked straight down from this point, were as perfect as if their fires had but just cooled, each basin-shaped hollow surrounded by a rim of miniature black cliffs, with heaps of ashes and scoriæ piled on their sides. In the bottom of one or two water had gathered in greenish tarns or pools.[1]

Not knowing how far the ridge I was following might continue passable, I was obliged to stop frequently to survey the rocks above, and erect little piles of stones to mark the way. This not only consumed time, but so completely absorbed the attention that for hours together I scarcely noticed the marvellous landscape spread out beneath, and felt the solemn grandeur of the scenery far less than many times before on less striking mountains. Solitude at great heights, or among majestic rocks or forests, commonly stirs in us all deep veins of feeling, joyous or saddening, or more often of joy and sadness mingled. Here the strain on the observing senses seemed too great for fancy or emotion to have any scope. When the mind is preoccupied by the task of the moment, imagination is checked. This was a race against time, in which I could only scan the cliffs for a route, refer constantly to the watch, husband my strength by morsels of food taken at frequent

[1] These little cones appear in the frontispiece between the base of Great and the base of Little Ararat, immediately to the right of the top of the projecting buttress which is seen in front between the two Ararats.

intervals, and endeavour to conceive how a particular block or bit of slope which it would be necessary to recognise would look when seen the other way in descending.

Keeping mostly on the south-western side of this same rock-rib, and mounting at last to the top of it, I found myself on the edge of a precipice, which stopped farther progress in that direction. From this precipice, the summit, or at least the place where it must lie, since there was a great deal of cloud about in these higher regions, could be made out, barely 1000 feet above me. Fortunately, the clouds were really clouds, and not a generally diffused mist, so that, when I was not actually in them, it was possible to see clearly all round. Two courses were open. One, which would probably have been the better, was to bear off to the right, and get up the low cliffs at the top of the long stone slope which I had deserted, on to the upper slopes of rock, or gently inclined snow, which lead to the top. The other was to turn back a little, and descend to the left into a vast snow basin lying immediately south-east of the summit, and whose north-west acclivity formed, in fact, the side of the summit. This acclivity looked a likely place for crevasses, though I do not remember to have seen any, and was steep enough to require step cutting. Its *névé* would have been quite practicable for a party, but not equally so for a single man, who might have had some trouble in stopping himself if once he slipped and went off. Luckily there was on the east side of the basin, close under the range of

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precipice on a projecting point of which I was standing, though separated from it by a narrow snow-bed, a steep slope of friable rocks, quite free from snow, which ran up to a point where the clouds hid them, but where there seemed no sign of any cliff to bar the way. Forced to decide between a course which was difficult, but almost certainly practicable, and another probably easier, but possibly impracticable, I could not hesitate long in choosing the former. Retracing my steps a little from the precipice, and climbing along the border of a treacherous little ice-slope, where there was fortunately some handhold on the rocks enclosing it, I got into the great snow basin aforesaid, just where the gully or fissure I have already mentioned descends from it, and attacked the friable rocks. Their angle (38 to 43 degrees) would have made them simple enough if they had only been firm, but they were so rotten [1] that neither hands nor feet could get firm hold, and I slipped down and scrambled up and floundered about pitiably, having no longer steel enough in the muscles for a rush. Among these rocks I was saluted by a violent sulphurous smell, much like that of a battery of cannon just fired off, and perceived at the same time patches of whitish and reddish-yellow stuff effloresing from the ground, reminding me of similar deposits noticed on Hekla and the half extinct volcano of Krabla in Iceland. This was delightfully volcanic, and I began to look about for some trace of

[1] The rock was exactly what is called in the Venetian Alps *croda morta*, a term so happily descriptive (especially when compared with the *vivum saxum* of the ancients) that it ought to be made technical.

an eruptive vent, or at least for hot vapours betraying the presence of subterranean fires. Nothing of the kind, however, was to be seen. The shape of this basin makes it probable that it was really a former seat of volcanic action; but the smell and the efflorescences are no doubt due—as Abich, who (as I afterwards learnt) had observed them, remarks—to the natural decomposition of the trachytic rock, which is full of minute crystals of iron pyrites (sulphide of iron). This, in disintegrating under the moisture of these heights, gives off sulphuric acid gas, whence the smell, and combines with the lime and alumina present in the felspar of the same rock to form sulphates of lime and alumina, mixed with more or less sulphate of iron or chloride of iron, which gives the reddish or yellow hue. Lumps of these and other minerals are seen lying about; I found one, a piece of gypsum, with handsome crystals, on the surface of the snow close to the top. Abich further suggests that the process of chemical change which goes on so briskly here may be one cause of the freedom of these rocks from snow, an extraordinary phenomenon when one considers that they run up to very near the summit (17,000 feet), and, though steep, are less steep than many ice walls in the Alps or the Caucasus lying, in equally exposed places, far nearer to the lower limit of perpetual snow, which on Ararat averages 14,000 feet. Not only is some heat evolved in the decomposing process, but the sulphates thereby formed themselves act as solvents, just as common salt does when you sprinkle it on an ice-covered door-step.

All the way up this rock-slope, which proved so fatiguing that for the fourth time I had almost given up hope, I kept my eye fixed on its upper end to see what signs there were of crags or snow-fields above. But the mist lay steadily at the point where the snow seemed to begin, and it was impossible to say what might be hidden behind that soft white curtain. As little could I conjecture the height I had reached by looking round, as one so often does on mountain ascents, upon other summits, for by this time I was thousands of feet above Little Ararat, the next highest peak visible, and could scarcely guess how many thousands. From this tremendous height it looked more like a broken obelisk than an independent summit 12,800 feet in height. Clouds covered the farther side of the great snow basin, and were seething like waves about the savage pinnacles, the towers of the Jinn palace, which guard its lower margin, and past which my upward path had lain. With mists to the left and above, and a range of black precipices cutting off all view to the right, there came a vehement sense of isolation and solitude, and I began to understand better the awe with which the mountain silence inspires the Kurdish shepherds. Overhead the sky had turned from dark blue to an intense bright green, a colour whose strangeness seemed to add to the weird terror of the scene. It wanted barely an hour to the time when I had resolved to turn back; and as I struggled up the crumbling rocks, trying now to right and now to left, where the foothold looked a little firmer, I began to doubt whether there was

strength enough left to carry me an hour higher. At length the rock-slope came suddenly to an end, and I stepped out upon the almost level snow at the top of it, coming at the same time into the clouds, which naturally clung to the colder surfaces. A violent west wind was blowing, and the temperature must have been pretty low, for a big icicle at once enveloped the lower half of my face, and did not melt till I got to the bottom of the cone, four hours afterwards. Unluckily, I was very thinly clad, the stout tweed coat reserved for such occasions having been stolen on a Russian railway. The only expedient to be tried against the piercing cold was to tighten in my loose light coat by winding round the waist a Spanish *faja*, or scarf, which I had brought up to use, in case of need, as a neck wrapper. Its bright purple looked odd enough in such surroundings, but as there was nobody there to notice, appearances did not much matter. In the mist, which was now thick, the eye could pierce only some thirty yards ahead ; so I walked on over the snow five or six minutes, following the rise of its surface, which was gentle, and fancying there might still be a good long way to go. To mark the backward track, I trailed the point of the ice-axe along behind me in the soft snow, for there was no longer any landmark : all was cloud on every side. Suddenly, to my astonishment, the ground began to fall away to the north ; I stopped, a puff of wind drove off the mists on one side, the opposite side to that by which I had come, and showed the Araxes plain at an abysmal depth below. It was the top of Ararat.

Two or three minutes afterwards another blast cleared the air a little to the west, which had hitherto been perfectly thick, disclosing a small snow valley, and beyond it, a quarter of a mile off, another top, looking about the same height as the one I stood on. Remembering, what I had strangely forgotten on the way up, that there are two tops—one sees them distinctly from Erivan and Aralykh—I ran down the steep, soft sides of the snow valley, across it in the teeth of the blast, and up the easy acclivity to the other top, reaching it at 2.25 P.M. It is certainly the higher of the two, but the difference is not great, only some thirty feet or so, and I cannot understand how General Chodzko comes to speak of it as amounting to thirty-six metres.[1] The longitudinal depression between them is 100–150 feet deep. Both tops are gently sloping domes or broad convex hummocks of snow, on which there is not a trace of rock, nor a trace of the crosses which first Parrot and afterwards Chodzko set up, just as little as of Noah's ship itself. One thought of the pictures of childhood, the Ark resting on a smooth, round grassy eminence, from which the waters are receding, while the Patriarch looks out of the window, and compared them with this snow-filled hollow, just large enough to have held the vessel comfortably, raised 15,000 feet above the surrounding country. Neither is there any sign of a crater. You

[1] See his brief account of his ascent in a communication to the French Alpine Club, published in their 'Transactions' for 1876. Herr Abich, to whom I wrote on seeing this, tells me he cannot understand it either. From the north-eastern top (not having time to go on to the western) he thought the difference very slight.

might describe the whole top as a triangular undulating plain, rather more than half as big as the Green Park in London, descending gently on the north-west, with extensive terraces like fields of *névé*, less gently towards the north-north-east, but steeply on all other sides, and on the east breaking off, after a short snow-field, in the tremendous precipices that overhang the chasm of Arguri. There was nothing about it to suggest an extinct volcano, were it not known to be one. But in the ages that have elapsed since the time when eruptions took place from the great central chimney of the dome, a time probably far more remote than that when the minor cones that stud the flanks of the mountain were active, all sorts of changes may have taken place, and the summit we now see may be merely the bottom of an ancient crater, whose craggy rim has been altogether broken away. Looking around, it was hard to imagine that volcanic fires had ever raged on such a spot, robed as it now is in perpetual winter.

Immeasurably extensive and grand as the view was, it was also strangely indefinite. Every mountaineer knows that the highest views are seldom the finest; and here was one so high that the distinctions of hill and valley in the landscape were almost lost. Ararat towers so over all his neighbours, much more than Mont Blanc or even Elbruz do over theirs, that they seem mere hillocks on a uniform flat. The only rivals are in the Caucasus, which one can just make out all along the northern sky. Kazbek and Elbruz, the latter 280 miles away, are visible, but I could not be

sure that I saw them, for the sky was not very clear in that direction. More distinct were the mountains of Daghestan, rising 150 miles off, over the nearer ones that engirdle the Goktcha Lake, a little bit of whose shining levels appeared. Beyond the dreary red-brown mountains of the Karabagh one strained to discover a line that might be the Caspian or the plain of the lower Kur, but, of course, at such a distance 260 miles) it would be impossible to distinguish a sea-surface. Besides, the Caspian is below the horizon; so one must reject, unless the aid of refraction be called in, the stories of mariners who, sailing on it, have been able to make out the white cone of Ararat. Nearer at hand, only forty miles to the north, rose the huge extinct volcano of Ala Göz, with its three sharp black rocky peaks enclosing an ancient crater, in whose bottom were patches of snow; and, nearer still, the dim plain of Erivan encircled the mountain to the north and east, with the Araxes winding like a faint streak of silver through it. A slight rise in the ground showed where Erivan itself lay, but the bright green of the orchards and vineyards round it was lost at this distance, though, standing in the market-place of the city, Ararat seems to tower right over the spectator's head. Looking due west, the extreme ranges of Taurus mingling with the Bingöl Dagh in the neighbourhood of Erzerum were hidden by the clouds which the wind kept driving up; but north-west the upper valley of the Araxes could be traced as far as Ani, once the capital of the Armenian kingdom, and the great Russian fortress of

Alexandropol, and the hills where Kars, its enemy, looks forth defiance. To the south and south-west the eye ranged over a wilderness of bare red-brown mountains, their sides seamed by winter torrents that showed in the distance like dark lines, not a tree nor a patch of green on their scorched and arid slopes, scarcely even a fleck of snow on their tops, though many rose more than 10,000 or 11,000 feet above the sea. Prominent among them was the long stern line of hills that enclose the upper course of the Euphrates (the Eastern Euphrates or Murad Su), whose source could be distinguished about forty miles to the south, beyond the hollow where Bayazid lies, the houses of which were hidden by a low ridge. Still further to the south, from the shores of the Lake of Van, rose the great volcanic peak of Sipan Dagh, and to the south-east the stupendous masses of Savalan Dagh, that look over all Azerbijan to the waves of the Caspian. Neither the Lake of Van nor the still larger Lake of Urumia was visible; for both, though high above the sea, are enclosed by lofty hills. But far beyond them, more than two hundred miles away, I could just descry the faint blue tops of the Assyrian mountains of Southern Kurdistan, the Qardu land, where Chaldee tradition places the fragments of the Ark, mountains that look down on Mosul and those huge mounds of Nineveh by which the Tigris flows. Below and around, included in this single view, seemed to lie the whole cradle of the human race, from Mesopotamia in the south to the great wall of the Caucasus that covered the

northern horizon, the boundary for so many ages of the civilized world. If it was indeed here that man first set foot again on the unpeopled earth, one could imagine how the great dispersion went as the races spread themselves from these sacred heights along the courses of the great rivers down to the Black and Caspian Seas, and over the Assyrian plain to the shores of the Southern Ocean, whence they were wafted away to other continents and isles. No more imposing centre of the world could be imagined. In the valley of the Araxes beneath, the valley which Armenian legend has selected as the seat of Paradise, the valley that has been for three thousand years the high-road for armies, the scene of so much slaughter and misery, there lay two spots which seemed to mark the first and the latest points of authentic history. One, right below me, was the ruined Artaxata, built, as the tale goes, by Hannibal, and stormed by the legions of Lucullus. The other, far to the north-west, was the hollow under the hills in which lies the fortress of Kars, where our countrymen fought in 1854, and where the flames of war were so soon again to be lighted.

Yet how trivial history, and man the maker of history, seemed. This is the spot which he reveres as the supposed scene of his creation and his preservation from the destroying waters, a land where he has lived and laboured and died ever since his records begin, and during ages from which no record is left. Dynasty after dynasty has reared its palaces, faith after faith its temples, upon this plain; cities have risen and fallen and risen again in the long struggle

of civilization against the hordes of barbarism. But of all these works of human pomp and skill, not one can be discerned from this height. The landscape is now what it was before man crept forth on the earth; the mountains stand about the valleys as they stood when the volcanic fires that piled them up were long ago extinguished. Nature sits enthroned, serenely calm, upon this hoary pinnacle, and speaks to her children only in the storm and earthquake that level their dwellings in the dust. As says the Persian poet:

> "When you and I behind the veil are passed,
> O but the long long while the world shall last,
> Which of our coming and departure heeds
> As the Seven Seas should heed a pebble's cast."

Yet even the mountains change and decay. Every moment some block thunders from these crags into the glens below. Day by day and night by night frost, snow, and rain are loosening the solid rock, and the ceaseless action of chemical forces is dissolving it into its primal elements, setting free the gases, and delivering over the fragments to torrents that will sweep them down into the plain. A time must come, if the world lasts long enough, when even the stately peaks of Ararat will have crumbled away and be no more. "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years fail not."

Withal I am bound to say that the view, spite of

the associations it evoked, spite of the impression of awe and mystery it gave, was not beautiful or splendid, but rather stern, grim, and monotonous. The softer colours of the landscape seemed to be lost; the mountains, seen from above, and seldom showing well-marked peaks, were uncouth, rough-hewn masses. One had a sense of vast sterility and dreariness as the vision ranged over this boundless expanse of brown, and sought, almost in vain, a point to recognize. For most of these huge mountains are nameless on our maps; and these bare valleys are peopled by races of whom we know little except that they live now much as they may have lived when that first dispersion of mankind took place. Then suddenly, while the eye was still unsatisfied with gazing, the curtain of mists closed round again, and I was left alone in this little plain of snow, white, silent, and desolate, with a vividly bright green sky above it and a wild west wind whistling across it, clouds girding it in, and ever and anon through the clouds glimpses of far-stretching valleys and mountains away to the world's end.

The awe that fell upon me with this sense of utter loneliness made time pass unnoticed; and I might have lingered long in a sort of dream had not the piercing cold that thrilled through every limb recalled me to a sense of the risks delay might involve. It was half-past two o'clock, so that only four hours of daylight remained; there might be some difficulty in retracing the morning's path, even by the help of the piles of stone set up: a night on the mountain without food or wrappings would be a more serious matter

than any obstacle that had yet presented itself. Besides, as night approached, my friend below would grow anxious; the rather as he could not communicate with the Cossacks, and their stock of provisions would scarcely enable them and him to wait till the next day. It was clear therefore that the hope of descending the summit towards the west and north for the sake of better examining its structure, which no one seems to have properly described, must be abandoned. So I ran down the easy slope into the little valley between the two tops, climbed the snow wall of the eastern one, and followed the marks made by my ice-axe in the snow back to the spot where I had left the rocks. The mist was now so thick that it would otherwise have been impossible to hit the right direction; for though I had a compass, on a volcanic mountain like Ararat, with plenty of iron in the rocks, one could not have trusted it. I have seen the needle on the basaltic top of Ben Nevis point every way in succession. Once on the slope of friable rock, the way was pretty clear, since a snow-bed lay on each hand, though the treacherous nature of the surface made caution necessary and progress slow. Towards the bottom I was tempted to try a glissade on the narrow left-hand snow-bed, but it turned out to be much too rough and too hard for the purpose; so my glissade ended in a slip and some bruises, the only little mischance which befel me during the day.

A few minutes more brought me to the upper end of the great fissure of eruption already mentioned, along whose eastern side I had climbed in the morn-

ing, partly on the slope, partly on the top, of the rock-rib or *arête* which encloses it on the east. Surveying the declivity below me from the top of this rock-rib, it seemed possible to descend by a route considerably shorter than that which I had then followed, viz. by striking diagonally across the slopes of loose rock towards the east-south-east, instead of due south-east down the cone. Taking this line, which presented no great difficulty except where the loose, angular blocks became so large that much time was lost in climbing over and among them, I dropped down at last upon a large snow-bed,[1] and in crossing it had the ill-luck to break off the spike of my ice-axe, which had been unskilfully fixed by the military carpenter of Aralykh. It was well that the inclination was not steep enough to make the rest of the way dangerous; by caution and the use of the head of the ice-axe to cut steps or take hold of the ice, I got safely across, and on to another mass of loose rocks, down which I pursued the same south-eastward course, and thought I began to recognize the long ridge up which we had toiled in the morning. To the left rose the sharp peak which is called, in Tatar, Tach Kilissa, and at the foot of it, on

[1] This snow-field stretches right up to the top of the mountain, and would afford a practicable route to it, although a tiresome one, for in most parts of it the inclination is steep enough to make step-cutting necessary. At the point where I crossed, it is a kind of tongue from a wider snow-field above, up which Messrs. Freshfield and Tucker and their Swiss guide seem to have made their spirited attack on the mountain in 1868. They went (as far as I can gather) from Sardarbulakh right up past Tach Kilissa, and were prevented from reaching the summit only by illness, the result of long travel in Russian telegas. See the very interesting account of their expedition in Mr. Freshfield's 'Central Caucasus.'

the top of the ridge I have just mentioned, was the spot where my friend and the Cossacks had halted; the spot I had now to make for. By this time the sun had got behind the south-western ridge of the mountain, and his gigantic shadow had already fallen across the great Araxes plain below, while the red mountains of Media, far to the south-east, still glowed redder than ever, then turned swiftly to a splendid purple in the dying light.

Quickening my pace as the risk of missing the encampment became greater, feeling, in fact, that it was now a race against the onward striding night in which defeat would be serious, I caught sight at last of two Cossacks loitering on the edge of the slope of sand and gravel which had proved so fatiguing in the morning, and after a while made them hear my shouts. When I reached them, it was six o'clock; and though at this height (12,200 feet) there was still good twilight, Aralykh and the ruins of Artaxata below lay already shrouded in gloom. Twenty-five minutes' more walking brought us to the place where the Kurds and the other Cossacks had bivouacked; and here, when it was already so dark that we could barely recognize one another a few yards off, my friend came forward and met me. He had spent most of the day near the spot where we parted, coming down eventually to this point, which was a little lower, had seen the Kurd return, but of course could get no tidings from him of me, had slept about a good deal among shady places in the rocks, making up for the vigils of the last week, and had latterly, as the evening deepened, wandered

round, keeping a sharp look-out on the slopes above. We examined the provisions, and found that nothing but a lump of bread, a mere scrap of meat, two eggs, and a thimbleful of cold tea were left. Happily neither of us had much appetite; the sun had kept hunger at bay for him, and meat lozenges had done the same for me; so our frugal evening meal was soon despatched. A little hot tea would have been welcome—four weeks under the sceptre of the Czar had made us perfect slaves to tea; but as there was neither fuel, nor water, nor a vessel to boil it in, the hope was no sooner formed than abandoned. Accordingly, about half-past seven, we lay down on the hillside, my friend valiantly on the top of the ridge, I a yard or two below him on the eastern side, the Cossacks and Kurds all round where they severally pleased, and we courted sleep. They, to judge by the sounds that broke the mountain silence, courted not in vain, but we two, although rather tired, found the position too novel, and lay half conscious in a drowsy reverie; dropping off at last to wake with a start at midnight, when the moon's pale horn was just shewing over the Median mountains. Fortunately there had been little wind. Though the air was sharp, and my friend rose in a fit of shivering which at first alarmed us, I do not think the temperature can have fallen to freezing-point, and should have guessed it to be about from 36° to 40° Fahrenheit, no great cold for an exposed point about 11,500 feet above the sea. Unhappily we had no thermometer; it had been necessary to restrict our baggage to the lightest and most

indispensable articles. Even the aneroid which had come with us from Tiflis I had been forced by its weight to leave behind in the tent at Sardarbulakh.

After packing our scanty stock of camping gear as well as we could in the darkness, and counting the bundles on the Kurds' backs, we set off down the dark ridges and darker valleys, stumbling about over huge rocks under the feebly glimmering moon, losing often our companions, and sometimes the way itself. How we got safe down was a marvel to us at the time; but one frequently has the same cause for wonder in night walks. Perhaps the muscles and sinews, knowing what depends upon them, acquire a sort of preternatural elasticity and readiness, which enables them to adapt themselves to an emergency, and carry one safely through innumerable risks. There was no track, but the Kurds seemed to have an idea where they were going. Many were the halts which the Cossacks made, stretching themselves on the grass to laugh and talk; nor was it now worth while to hurry them. Now and then we tried to get a nap during these delays, but though scarcely able to walk for drowsiness, as soon as we lay down and shut our eyes, we became bolt awake. At length the morning star rose in unearthly brightness, and not long after we came to a sweet little grassy plain, where two or three Kurds, whose flocks were pasturing hard by, had lit a fire of withered bushes, to which our Kurds led us up in a friendly way, bidding us (as we guessed) warm ourselves. The Cossacks had nearly all gone on out of sight, and we were (as it afterwards struck

us) entirely at the mercy of these wild, swarthy fellows, on whose glittering daggers and matchlocks the firelight played. However, they had no thought of mischief; perhaps, if it had occurred to them, the sense of hospitality, which is proverbially strong in the East, would have restrained them from harming those with whom they had eaten. Then between four and five o'clock another glorious dawn began; and just before sunrise we reached the tent at Sardarbulakh, much to the relief of Jaafar's mind, and flung ourselves down on the tent floor to sleep the sleep of the weary.

Roused again at eight or nine o'clock—both the watches had stopped, so we could only guess at the time of day—we ought clearly to have gone up Little Ararat, and obtained from his top a fuller notion of his great brother's structure. Provisions, however, ran short, and the Cossacks were anxious to return to Aralykh, taking back with them their comrades whom we had found in the two tents, as the post was to be withdrawn for the season. Accordingly the tents were struck, everything packed on the baggage horses, the Kurds paid for their day's and night's service on the hill. Then, before starting, the Cossacks gathered in a ring in front of the spot where the tents had stood, and began singing Russian songs. The words we, of course, could not follow—I believe they were mostly camp songs, some commemorating military exploits, some farewells to departing comrades—but the airs, usually lively, but occasionally tender and plaintive, dwelt long in our

memory. One stood in the middle and led, firing off a gun at intervals, the others sometimes singing with him, sometimes merely joining in the refrain or chorus. The voices were good, and the time perfect.

In an English daily newspaper of July 27, 1877, I found the following passage:—"Utterly remorseless, the Cossack falls upon a hostile country like a demon of destruction. There is no getting away from his thirsty lance, no assuaging his fierce fury, no appeasing that innate devilry which makes him regard cruelty to his fellow-creatures as a delightful pastime. Mercy to the conquered is not a part of the Cossack creed. The savage does not expect it, does not give it. He is content to carry his life in his hand, for those to take who can; but while it remains with him, he intends to make it pleasant, according to his lights, by miscellaneous pillage and slaughter."

Now I cannot say what the Cossack may be in war time, for I saw him only in peace. In all men the brute comes out at the taste of blood; and no doubt in him also. What I can venture to say is that, comparing him in time of peace with the soldiers of other countries, I have never seen any so apparently gentle, so unlikely to prove, even in war, "utterly remorseless demons of destruction." These sons of harmony were the merriest, simplest, most good-natured fellows we could have wished to ramble over the hills with. The countenance after all cannot wholly belie the character; and among the hundreds of Cossacks we met in the Caucasian provinces, there were fewer hard or

fierce faces than we had ever seen in as many fighting men before. "Wanton cruelty," "innate devilry," and so forth, are not passions that can be wholly repressed even in peace time; yet I never heard from either the Armenians or the Germans, who are keen critics of everything Russian, a word of complaint as to the behaviour of these irregulars among the people. No doubt the Cossack has a keen scent for supplies on a campaign, and helps himself pretty freely, without paying for what he takes. But there is not a particle of evidence to show that he has of late years ever done anything more cruel in war than all troops do,[1] the French, the German, or our own. Compare him with the Austrian Pandurs of last century, or the Bashi-Bazouks of to-day, and he seems almost white against such foul blackness. Of course I do not suppose that the writer of this article had anything particular in his eye. He wanted to write tellingly: and the article was telling. But is it not pitiful that at this time of day able writers should be content to stir up hatred between nations for the sake of a little literary effect?

Before noon we bid a regretful farewell to Sardar-bulakh, and rode down into the plain, this time taking a track outside of the buttress of Takjaltu, instead of behind it, and thence across the arid slopes to Aralykh, which we reached about four o'clock without further incident, though once during the way an alarm was given that there were strange people about, and

[1] We can all remember the false stories that were industriously circulated about the excesses of the Germans in France in 1870, and of the Federal troops in the American Civil War; yet it is now generally admitted that no invading troops ever behaved so well.

Jaafar rode ahead to reconnoitre. Owing, I suppose, to the bracing quality of the keen dry air, we were much less fatigued than we had expected to be. Colonel Shipshef welcomed us with characteristic heartiness, and we spent a pleasant evening with him, lamenting more than ever that unhappy event at the tower of Babel which made our communications so limited. Next morning we mounted the tarantass once more, and drove off across the Araxes and through the dusty villages back into the furnace of Erivan.

Two days later I found myself at the Armenian monastery of Etchmiadzin, near the northern foot of Ararat, and was presented to the archimandrite who rules that illustrious house. It came out in conversation that we had been on the mountain, and the Armenian gentleman who was acting as interpreter turned to the archimandrite and said: "This Englishman says he has ascended to the top of Massis" (Ararat). The venerable man smiled sweetly. "No," he replied, "that cannot be. No one has ever been there. It is impossible."

CHAPTER VIII.

ETCHMIADZIN AND THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE.

AFTER returning to Erivan from Ararat, we made a hurried expedition to the famous monastery of Etchmiadzin, which claims to be the oldest monastic foundation in the world, and has for many centuries been the seat of the Armenian Patriarch or Katholikos, the spiritual head of all true Armenians, in whatsoever empire, Russian, Turkish, Persian, Austrian, or British, they may dwell. It is distant about thirteen miles, some two hours driving, from Erivan, and the journey gave us our first experience of that wonderful vehicle the Russian telega. Our faithful tarantass had suffered from the roads to Aralykh, and been obliged to go into hospital, so at the post-house they produced to us this contrivance—a cart, or shallow lidless box, about six feet long by four wide, set upon wheels with no pretence of springs or anything in the nature of springs. A little hay was thrown in, among which we were told to squat. We put in a travelling bag, but soon found it impossible to sit upon that, or on the sides of the box itself, for the jolting knocked one about like a pea on a hot iron. While the team of three scraggy beasts walked, the

shocks came slowly and were tolerable, but as soon as the pace was quickened they became so violent that we could only hold ourselves in the cart by grasping its sides, and a whisky flask which had been safely lodged in my companion's breast coat-pocket was shot out like a cannon ball, and flung to a distance in the road, where of course it broke into a hundred pieces. How people manage to travel for many continuous days in such vehicles without grievous bodily harm, it is hard to understand, but the thing is done. The road was no doubt very bad, so bad that it was a relief to get off it into the bed of a stream or on to the steppe, whose natural stoniness was less horrible than the artificial stoniness of the highway. But this road was not worse than all roads, except the main post *chaussée*, are in these countries.

The evening was serenely clear. Ararat to the south, and the dark mysterious mountains towards Kars in the far west, riveted our eyes, and there was something inexpressibly solemn in the great desolate plain that lay around us under the dying light—a plain in which Armenian tradition places the site of the Garden of Eden. The curse of the flaming sword might well be thought to have clung to it, for few spots on earth have seen more ruin and slaughter than this Araxes valley. It has been the highway through which the Eastern conquerors and marauders, from the days of the Sassanid kings Shapur and Chosroes Nushirvan, down through those of the Saracen and Turkish and Mongol and Persian invaders, have poured their hosts upon the fertile shores of the

Euxine. Here the Romans strove with the Parthians; here Alp Arslan overthrew the Armenian kingdom of the middle ages; here, down to our own days, Turks and Persians and Russians have carried on a scarcely interrupted strife. From Kars to Djulfa there is hardly a spot of ground that has not been soaked with blood, hardly a village that has not many times been laid in ruins. Yet when the storm is past, the patient peasant returns; he draws water again from the ancient canals whose network covers the plain, and remembers these scourges of mankind only in vague traditions, where the names of Nimrod and Semiramis are mingled with those of Tamerlane and Nadir Shah.

It was nearly dark when we reached the village of Vagarshabad at seven o'clock, and as we had no interpreter there was some difficulty in discovering the officials to whom our letters of commendation were addressed. When their houses were found they turned out to be absent, so we drove straight to the monastery, prowled for some time in the deepening night round its lofty walls, much like those of a mediæval fortress, and at last made out a gate, to which after long hammering there came a porter. When he opened and saw that we were foreigners, he brought at last a young Armenian gentleman from the Armenian colony in Southern Russia, who was able to speak French. Our troubles were then at an end; we were received with much friendliness by the archimandrite, and lodged in a guest-chamber overlooking the great front quadrangle. On our apologizing for intruding

on their religious seclusion at so late an hour, they answered that to entertain strangers was with them a duty as well as a pleasure; so that we might have claimed hospitality even had we come unrecommended.

Etchmiadzin is the ecclesiastical metropolis of the Armenian nation,[1] and has been so, though with a long intermission (A.D. 452–1441), since the year A.D. 302, when, according to tradition, the first Christian church in Armenia was founded here by St. Gregory the Illuminator, on the spot whereon the Saviour had descended in a ray of light. The place was then called, from some ancient king who had founded it, Vagarshabad, a name still retained by the neighbouring village. The word Etchmiadzin means in Armenian, "The only-begotten descended."

Tiridates, or Dertad, the reigning monarch whom Gregory then enlightened (Enlightenment is the technical Armenian term for conversion), was the first king who embraced Christianity along with his people, Constantine's so-called conversion not happening till either twelve or thirty-seven years later, according as one reckons to the battle of the Milvian Bridge or to his baptism. Armenia, therefore, is the first country to have enjoyed the privileges of an ecclesiastical

[1] The authority of the Patriarch of Etchmiadzin was for a long time disputed by a patriarch who resided at Akhtamar, an island in the Lake of Van, and is, I fancy, still disputed by a patriarch at Sis, among the mountains of Cilicia, where the warlike Armenian tribes maintain a sort of independence. However, this latter rival has now few subjects; Constantinople and all the Gregorian Armenians (= those not united to Rome and not Protestants) throughout the world recognize Etchmiadzin.

establishment, although the attacks of the Persian fire-worshippers, and of various Mohammedan Khalifs, Sultans, and Shahs in later times, gave it a very troubled and precarious existence. At first the bishop of Etchmiadzin was a suffragan of the metropolitan of Caesarea in Cappadocia, by whom Gregory had been consecrated; but when the Persian kings established their supremacy in the next century, they broke this link between Armenia and the Roman Empire. Shortly afterwards came the Council of Chalcedon, whose decrees the Armenian Church first hesitated, and finally, in A.D. 491, refused to accept, thereby severing herself from the Orthodox Eastern Church. So to this day she remains out of communion with the Greek patriarch of Constantinople, as well as with the Church of Russia, and is held both by them and by the Roman Church to be tainted with the Monophysite heresy, which the fathers of Chalcedon condemned. Ever since those days, though attempts at reconciliation were occasionally made, and seemed for the moment to be successful, she has remained a perfectly independent ecclesiastical body, owning no superior above her own Patriarch or Katholikos, who is, in fact, a sort of administrative Pope, but of course without infallibility. He is chosen by the whole body of Armenian bishops throughout the world, who meet here for the purpose, and is then confirmed by the Czar, who protects him and enforces his authority. Those Armenian Christians, a minority dating from the time of the Crusades, who are in communion with the Latin Church, although allowed to

retain their own rite, of course do not recognise the prelate of Etchmiadzin, but have a patriarch of their own, who resides at Constantinople, and owns allegiance to Rome. There has lately been a schism among these so-called United Armenians, some refusing obedience to the Pope, while others cling to him. Small as the matter may appear to us at this distance, it excites great interest in the Roman Curia, for whose zeal or ambition nothing is too small or too great. And a desire to have the authority of the United patriarch who adheres to Rome supported by the Porte, against the other United patriarch who is disobedient, has been conjectured, not without probability, to be one chief motive which has induced Pope Pius IX. to extend his moral support to Turkey in her struggle with Russia.[1]

The monastery of Etchmiadzin (here, as in Russia, it is at monasteries that episcopal seats are fixed; every Russian prelate lives in one) has been frequently destroyed or injured by the numerous invaders that have swept over the country, and as often restored.

[1] The schism began in 1869, when the Pope issued the bull *Reversuris*, by which he asserted his right to choose one out of three candidates presented to him for every bishopric, or to reject all three if he pleased, and also to have all the accounts and dealings of the Armenian Church and Patriarch laid before him. As no such right had (so said my informants) been previously exercised by him, a large body of the United Armenians in Constantinople, including the richest and best educated, refused to submit to this bull, and deposed the patriarch Hassun, appointing another pledged to resist Rome. The Porte, under the influence of Germany (as is supposed), recognized this rival; and the Pope's object is believed to be to induce the Porte to withdraw that recognition, and enforce the claims of Hassun, who is faithful to him.

The present church is supposed to contain some bits of wall as old as the fourth century, the main body of it being ascribed to the seventh or eighth; but I found it impossible to get any information on the spot which could be relied on, and the architectural style in these countries varies so little from one century to another that only a practised and skilful archæologist could undertake to pronounce on the date of a building from examining it. Like nearly all the older churches of Russia, as well as of the East, it is small—small, that is to say, compared with its fame or importance—perhaps a little larger than the Temple Church in London. It is cruciform, with exceedingly short transepts and a short apse—in fact, you might call it a square with four shallow recesses—the interior rather dark, with an air of heaviness which is scarcely redeemed by the frescos on the walls, drawn and coloured in the usual style of Persian arabesque, with birds, flowers, and various conventional ornaments. However, any cheerful decorations of this kind are welcome after the revolting pictures of hell and judgment that adorn the walls of so many Russian and Greek churches. There are two patriarchal thrones, one on each side of the apse, and a tabernacle over the central altar under the dome marks the spot on which the Saviour descended. Here a slab of marble covers the hole through which St. Gregory drove into the earth all the devils that in his day infested Armenia, and gave false oracles in the heathen temples. On this very spot there had stood a shrine and image of the goddess Anahit, just as the hill of Monte Casino was

crowned, when St. Benedict first went there, by a temple of Apollo. Between the apse and the body of the church is a sort of screen, somewhat similar to the *ikonostas* of Russian churches, but it is only a small part of the Armenian service that goes on behind this screen. On the whole, the interior is impressive, with a certain sombre dignity, and an air of hoar antiquity about everything: its pictures, some of them portraits of sainted patriarchs, and other decorations, have little artistic merit, but they are less offensive to the Protestant eye than the black Madonnas incrusted with precious stones which are the glory of Russian or other Orthodox places of worship. Externally the church has little that is distinctive about it. The tall central cupola rises into an octagonal spire, or rather conical tower, of the usual Armenian type, and is said to date from the seventh century, though I cannot believe it to be anything like so old. So, too, the four smaller open towers at the four extremities, the windows and doors, with their mouldings (the elegantly carved porch at the west end is especially handsome), are all in the regular style of Armenian building, and probably all modern, the towers of the seventeenth century, the porch of the eighteenth. A learned ecclesiological writer (Dr. Neale), however, insists that the ground plan of the church is rather Byzantine than Armenian, and his reasons, so far as I can judge of such a matter, seem to be sound. Of true Armenian architecture the finest and most characteristic specimens are to be found in the ruined city of Ani,

some thirty miles from here, towards Kars, and just within the Turkish border.

The other monastic buildings, only a small part of which consists of the dwellings of the brethren, are of no great architectural merit. What struck me as the oldest and most interesting are the two refectories, one of which, used in summer, a long, low vaulted room, with one narrow table running down the midst between stone benches, a throne under a canopy for the patriarch, and a sort of pulpit, whence reading goes on during meals, appears from its style to be not later than the twelfth century. However, there is a tradition assigning a much later origin to it. Old also is the library, to which we had come with great expectations, hearing of its treasures in the way of ancient manuscripts. Unfortunately there was no one on the spot who could tell us much about them, and I doubt if there is any one who knows much. The stock of printed books is quite small, not reaching 2000, and of course the great majority are in Armenian, most of the newer ones in Russian. There seems to be little ground for hoping that any Greek or Latin manuscripts, unless, possibly, of late ecclesiastical writers, remain to be discovered here; it is rather to Orientalists that researches into the libraries of the Armenian monasteries are to be recommended. The treasury, or, as we should say, the sacristy, in which the holy relics that constitute the great glory of Etchmiadzin are kept, is a new building at the east end of the church. Unhappily we could not gain admittance, owing to a cause which might seem to

cast a painful light on the want of security, or at least of confidence, among even the respectable ecclesiastics of this country. There is but one key to the treasury, and that key is kept by the patriarch, who carries it with him wherever he goes. He was then in a cool mountain retreat some miles away on the slopes of Ala Göz, and we were therefore obliged to forego the hope of seeing the head of the holy spear wherewith the Roman soldier pierced the side of Christ. It is asserted to have been brought to Armenia by Thaddeus the Apostle, and has therefore a far more respectable pedigree, so to speak, than the rival "holy lance" which the Crusaders discovered at Antioch with such magnificent results, or than that which Sir John Maundeville tells us he saw at Constantinople in the possession of the Eastern Emperor, not to speak of other claimants. In this treasure-house there is also a fragment of Noah's Ark, obtained, according to the legend stated in an earlier chapter, by the monk St. Jacob; and, what is the most curious of all, a withered mummy hand inclosed in a casing of silver, which purports to be the very hand of St. Gregory the Illuminator. This hand is actually used to this day in the consecration of every patriarch, who being touched by it receives the grace, as it were, direct from the founder of the Armenian Church. It is an instance of the carrying out, on its physical side, of the doctrine (I will not say of apostolic succession, but) of the transmission through earthen vessels of spiritual gifts, and their communication by physical means, which one is startled to find

still in full force in an important and respectable branch of the Christian Church. In the middle ages nothing would have seemed more natural or impressive; in the nineteenth century it looks a little different.

Within the lofty and battlemented wall that incloses the monastery, which has in its day repelled many a band of Tatar or Persian marauders, and may perhaps even have stood sieges before the days of cannon—it was repaired in the last century, but of its first erection there seems to be no record—there lies a great mass of buildings of different kinds, as well as some gardens and open spaces. Besides the cells of the monks, who number from twenty to thirty, there are, on the west side of the great square, apartments for the patriarch and for the archbishops, bishops, and archimandrites from other monasteries, who are frequently to be found here, consulting him on the affairs of their churches, or attending the general and supreme synod, which sits, almost in permanence, under his presidency. There are many subsidiary buildings, and among them a sort of bazaar, where some trade is done, chiefly in hay and corn produced by the monastic lands; in fact one has almost a little town within the walls of this fortress convent, a mile in circuit. Finally there is the seminary, a sort of school or college for the education of young Armenians chiefly, but not exclusively, with a view to their entering the priestly office. The school is supported by the monastic revenues, which, as they are said to amount to nearly £10,000 a year, arising partly from landed property

here and in Georgia, but mainly from the contributions of the loyal Armenian churches throughout the world, can well afford this charge, in addition to that of a sum paid to the patriarch and the maintenance of the monks and their establishment.

We were received at the seminary, which occupies a new and fairly commodious building to the east of the cathedral, by the Armenian archbishop of Tiflis, who is at present acting as its director. This able and accomplished prelate, who has lived long in the West, chiefly at Venice, and speaks French fluently, told us a good deal that was interesting about the school and the prospects of education in the country generally. There were about eighty boys or young men then attending, who are of course lodged in the monastery, and for the most part remain in it from the beginning to the end of their education, coming often from great distances. Among those present in the dining-hall some were from the heart of Persia, others from Cilicia, others from all sorts of places scattered through Asia Minor. The well-marked national type of countenance, the dark eyes and straight, black hair, came out strongly; and the quick intelligence of many of the faces was no less characteristic. The school labours under serious disadvantages from the difficulty of procuring competent teachers, and the state of blank ignorance in which so many pupils come; it is however making manful efforts to extend and raise its instruction, and the very fact that funds formerly spent in selfish indulgence should now be voluntarily devoted to this public purpose testifies to

an awakened life and hopefulness in the Armenian Church and people.

A magazine called 'Ararat' has recently been established; it is printed at the monastery, and of course in Armenian; nor is the press of Etchmiadzin idle in producing educational manuals, the class of books which are (strange as a British parent may think it) at present most scarce among the Armenians of these countries. Doubtless the seminary will do considerable good, both as a teaching institution and by acting as a centre of light and influence to the Armenian population scattered through the Turkish and Persian empires, some of whose children already resort hither to be trained. In fact the same sort of connection between a prelate living under a Christian monarch and his flock scattered through non-Christian lands is thus re-established which the Persian kings broke in the fifth century, when they cut off the Armenian bishops from their dependence on a metropolitan who was the subject of the Roman emperor.

A separate quadrangle, one side of which is formed by the southern outer wall, and which is graced by a fountain and pond in the centre, contains the rooms appropriated to guests, and in one of them on the first floor, opening off a small wooden gallery, we were lodged. It was a Friday, but they made no difficulty about giving us a substantial meat supper, some one probably knowing that the English do not regard those church fasts which are so prodigiously important in these countries. It is really quite a new light to a

Western to find that the chief difference, in the wilder places, between Christians, pagans, and Mahommedans, consists in the times or rules of fasting. We stayed the night in our chamber, suffering a good deal from the heat, and next morning were honoured by the apparition of an official, who seemed to be something between a mayor and a superintendent of police: his uniform was handsome enough for anything. He followed us round everywhere with the greatest punctiliousness, doing the honours of the monastery in rivalry with the archimandrite, and ultimately, when we started for Erivan, sent with us, as a guard of honour, a brace of ragged but fully armed tchapars, who galloped behind our telega along the road, and added very much to our sense of dignity, if not of security. There seemed to be very few other guests in the convent at the time of our visit. Probably it was the dead season; the heat was oppressive; there were fevers about; the Patriarch, to confer with whom most of the ecclesiastical visitors come, was absent in the mountains. He is named Kevork (George). At other times there are usually several archbishops, bishops, and abbots in attendance, though I fear they no longer work in the garden, as it is related that they once did. "Forty-seven archbishops," says Gibbon, "each of whom may claim the obedience of four or five suffragans, are consecrated by the hands of the patriarch of Ekmiasin, but the greater part are only titular prelates, who dignify with their presence and service the simplicity of his court. As soon as they have performed the

liturgy, they cultivate the garden: and our bishops will learn with surprise that the austerity of their life increases in just proportion to the elevation of their rank."

Formerly Etchmiadzin was the resort of immense numbers of pilgrims, both from the surrounding country and from the Armenians scattered through Asia; but now, like almost all the great old shrines, like Santiago, Einsiedeln, St. David's, Loretto, it has lost this source of wealth, and has also lost the visitors who halted at it as they passed along what was once the great trade route from Trebizond by Erzerum and Erivan to Tavriz and Northern Persia. The trade from Persia to the Black Sea now goes entirely through Turkish territory, I suppose in order to avoid Russian custom-houses, by way of Bayazid on the south-western side of Ararat. The village of Vagarshabad, lying a few hundred paces from the monastic fortress, is quite an insignificant place, with scarcely any trace of its former greatness. Only one mass of ancient brick building marks the place where there once stood, according to Armenian historians, 20,000 houses, the place where Tiridates reigned, at the time of his conversion, over a powerful kingdom. These Oriental cities, being mostly built of unburnt brick, and without great public structures, perish very swiftly, and leave little trace behind. Usually only the churches remain; and so here, near the convent, there stand two churches, probably more ancient than the cathedral itself, those of St. Rhipsime and St. Caiana, who were martyred in the time of Tiridates.

Rhipsime was a virgin of exquisite beauty. Accompanied by a band of maidens, she had fled from Rome to escape the addresses of the reigning emperor, whom, as a pagan, she could not espouse. Tiridates was equally smitten by her charms, and when she refused him for the same reason, he put her to death with hideous tortures, and killed at the same time her nurse Caiana.

The other sights of the place I have described as fully as a modern reader's patience is likely to bear, and will therefore say nothing of the cuneiform inscription, nor of the bell which bears, in Tibetan, the Buddhist formula *ôm ôm hrum*, nor of the famous fruit garden. The most really interesting thing in the convent is the library, mean as its appearance is; but people ignorant as we were of Armenian and other Eastern tongues could of course make nothing of it. I cannot but hope that, with the progress of education, there may arise native Armenian scholars who will examine its treasures more thoroughly than any one appears to have as yet done.

The present condition of the monks leaves much to be desired, as far as knowledge and education goes, but in general their monastic life will fairly bear a comparison with that of most Western as well as Russian foundations. It is not squalid; nor is it, according to monastic ideas, rigid, for though they fast a good deal, they do not mortify the flesh otherwise, and have quite shocked Roman Catholic travellers by enforcing no rule of silence. It is enlivened by the visits of prelates and pilgrims from a distance, and

now by the existence of the school, which might justify to a reforming eye the retention of the monastic estates, though it is happily needless to fear reforming eyes or hands in these lands of long repose. As no one seemed to speak any tongue but Armenian and Tatar, or in some few cases Russian, our communications with them were very limited. Their dress is becoming: it consists of a long black robe of a thin serge or tissue, not so thin as crape, and a peaked cap, from which a sort of veil of the same material falls back over the neck and shoulders. On the whole they impress a traveller perhaps more favourably than the inmates of convents generally do; inferior as they are in learning and polish to the brethren of that famous Western foundation, the mother of all Western monastic houses and the home of their founder, which is perhaps the chief rival of Etchmiadzin in antiquity and historical fame—the great Benedictine abbey of Monte Casino.

Unfortunately the situation of Etchimiadzin is by no means healthy, placed as it is in an excessively hot plain, on the banks of a stream which, being diverted into a number of channels for the purpose of irrigation, loses itself in fever-producing marshes. Except in the large convent garden just outside the walls, which borders the magnificent stone-faced fish-pond, or reservoir, formed by a late patriarch, there are no trees anywhere near; the landscape is bare and open all the way from the glens of Ala Göz and the brown mountains of the Karabagh in the east to the hills of Kars, far on the western horizon.

The glory of the place is its view of Ararat, which rises full in front in indescribable majesty, covered on this side with snow for a good way down. We could not take our eyes off it all the time we remained. Doubtless the neighbourhood of the holy mountain adds sensibly to the veneration which the oldest seat of their faith and the storehouse of so many relics commands from all pious or patriotic Armenians.

The Armenians are an extraordinary people, with a tenacity of natural life scarcely inferior to that of the Jews, and perhaps more remarkable, since it has not been forced upon them by such unremitting persecution. They have been a nation known by their present name ever since the days of Herodotus[1] at least, and probably a good deal earlier.[2] Under the Persian empire they seem to have retained their own princes, merely paying tribute to the Great King, and marching in his armies, as they did under Xerxes against Greece. That the same sort of arrangement lasted on in the days of the Seleucid kings may be conjectured from the fact that Artaxias and Zadriates, under whom Armenia recovered her independence, are described as being not only descendants of the

[1] Herodotus speaks of them as living on the Upper Euphrates, but conceives of the Saspeires as occupying the eastern part of what we should call Armenia, placing the latter between the Medes and the Colchians. Perhaps his Saspeires are the Iberians.

[2] The kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz of the Bible, the Armenian kingdom of Xenophon's Tigranes, the lover of Panthea, were probably within the compass of what we call Armenia, though the former cannot be placed there with absolute certainty, and we never know how far anything in the 'Cyropaedia' can be taken as historical.

royal house but also generals or lieutenants of Antiochus the Great. Not very long afterwards Digran, whom the Greek and Roman writers call Tigranes, threw off the suzerainty of the Parthian Arsacidæ, who had become the chief power of Western Asia, and made Armenia the centre of an empire which stretched from the Orontes to the Caspian. As he had supported his father-in-law, Mithridates of Pontus, against the Romans, he was attacked and his power shattered by Lucullus, who penetrated to the capital of Artaxata, at the north-east foot of Ararat. None of his successors was able to raise the kingdom to the same pitch; they maintained, however, a sort of unstable independence, playing off first the Parthians and then the Persian Sassanids against the Romans, and the Romans against the Parthians and Persians. From the time of Nero, who placed a native sovereign of the Arsacid family on the throne, they had generally rather leant on their Western neighbours. Shapur, the second of the Sassanid kings, conquered Armenia at the time when he defeated and took prisoner the unfortunate Emperor Valerian. Under Diocletian it was recovered for Rome, and Tiridates the Great (of course not the Tiridates[1] for whose fears Horace did not care, who was a Parthian, three centuries earlier) returned to the throne of his ancestors. The conversion of this Tiridates by his cousin, St. Gregory the Enlightener, whom he had confined

[1] Horace, Od. i. 26, 5. One can fancy Roman quidnuncs talking about the alarms of Tiridates much as ours do about the Khan of Khiva or Yakub Beg of Kashgar.

for fourteen years in a dry well, is the turning-point in the history of the nation.

From that day Armenia became the bulwark of Christianity in Asia. Overrun and ravaged by the Persian fire-worshippers, the first race or faith that set the example of religious intolerance and persecution, who at last extinguished the Arsacid kingdom about the year 440 A.D.; then, after the fall of the Persian power, by the Mohammedan khalifs of Bagdad; sometimes supported, sometimes abandoned by the Byzantine emperors, and torn all the while by internal dissensions and revolutions, she rose in the ninth century to be again a state of some importance in the world. The first flood of Arab conquest had subsided; the Roman emperors had even recovered lost territory; the Abbasside sovereigns had seen their dominions seized by a swarm of local potentates. Armenia was now ruled by the dynasty of the Bagratians, a family who claim to be descended from King David the Psalmist, and who may very possibly be really of Hebrew origin. Their capital was Ani, between Etchmiadzin and Kars, the magnificent ruins of whose churches and palaces remain to attest the transitory splendour and wealth of the kingdom they ruled. This Bagratid race gave a line of kings to Georgia, while some of its branches established themselves in Mingrelia and Imeritia. The family still exists, and ranks high among the nobility of Russia; one of them was the Prince Bagration, who was killed at Borodino in the Napoleonic campaign of 1812.

This mediæval Christian kingdom had bloomed in the lull of Muslim invasion caused by the decay of the great Bagdad khalifate. The storm that followed proved more fatal. The aggressive movement of Islam passed into the hands of a lately converted and fiercer race, the Turks, who were pressing in from the steppes of the Oxus. In the eleventh century the great Seljukian sultan Toghrul Beg conquered Persia, and became the master of Bagdad and the protector of the impotent khalif. His successor, Alp Arslan (the valiant lion), overran Armenia and Georgia in 1066 (the year of another famous conquest); the Romans of Constantinople, on whom Armenia had leaned, regarding with comparative indifference the miseries of Monophysite heretics.[1] Malek Shah, the successor of Alp Arslan, completed the conquest; Ani was sacked, and the Christian throne of Armenia finally overturned in 1075;[2] while the Turkish arms were carried as far as the Caucasus and the Euxine.

In the repeated invasions and devastations of their country which occupied these weary years, a great part of the Armenian people were driven from it, and scattered over the adjoining lands, especially through Asia Minor, where their descendants still constitute a large element, probably nearly one-

[1] The Emperor Romanus Diogenes, however, advanced against Alp Arslan into Southern Armenia, but was defeated and made prisoner in a great battle near the Lake of Van.

[2] Others give the date as 1079 or 1046. There is much confusion in the Armenian chronology; the conversion of Tiridates, for instance, is by some assigned to A.D. 286. The Armenians have an era of their own, which begins in A.D. 551.

fourth, of the entire population; while the void which they left was partially, but only partially, filled up by the immigration of half nomad Mohammedan Tatars or Turkmans, whose villages now lie scattered through Russian and Turkish Armenia. The existence of Armenia as an independent state was at an end;[1] and her later history, which I have neither the knowledge nor the time to describe, is little more than a dreary record first of warfare between the Byzantine emperors and the Seljukian Turks, then of devastations by the Mongols and the hosts of Timur, still later of a long and indecisive contest between the Ottoman sultans and Persia for the possession of these once flourishing provinces. But the Armenian people survived. They clung to their religion with a zeal all the more desperate that it was now all that their patriotism had to cling to. Though a certain number must no doubt have embraced Islam, as the conquered have everywhere done, the bulk of the race remained true to a faith which was no doubt deeply corrupted by ignorance and superstition, but which was their very life-blood, and through many weary centuries of oppression turned to the sacred walls of Etchmiadzin as to an ark alone visible amid the rising flood of

[1] The Christian kingdom of Lesser Armenia, in the south-east corner of Asia Minor, of which we hear occasionally in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, lay towards Cilicia and the north-east corner of the Levant, and was quite distinct from Old Armenia. It was founded by Armenian fugitives from Ani under a Bagratid prince. Its last sovereign, Leo VI., a Latin of the family of Lusignan, died at Paris in 1393. Otto of Brunswick, an ancestor of the house of Hanover, was once crowned king of this Armenia. There are still in the wild Cilician mountains some Armenian tribes practically independent of Turkey.

Mohammedan dominion. At last help began to appear from the north. Russia, even before she had established herself in Georgia, had begun to interfere for the protection of the Armenian Christians, and, when she was planted south of the Caucasus, could do so with more effect. The famous patriarch Narses, who was elected in 1843, being then seventy-three years of age, and had been the foremost man in the nation for many years, always maintained that the true policy of the Armenians was to look to and aid the advance of Russia, whether she were selfish or not in her designs, since the rest of Christendom was indifferent, and anything was better than Turkish and Persian tyranny. The event justified his anticipations. In 1827 the Czar Nicholas went to war with Persia, and wrested from her the whole upper valley of the Araxes, including Etchmiadzin itself. War with Turkey followed in 1828: the invaders under Paskievitch penetrated as far as Erzerum, and when they retired on the conclusion of peace in 1829, a multitude of Armenian subjects of Turkey followed them across the border and settled in Russian territory, where, unsatisfactory as we may think their condition, they are infinitely better off than they were under the Sultan or the Shah. I do not say that the Armenians love Russia, but neither do they hate her: she has, at any rate, given them security for the honour of their families and the enjoyment of the crops they raise. The reviving sentiment of nationality, the generally diffused belief that the Ottoman power is sickening towards death, the spread

of education, the easier intercourse with the West, the prosperity of individual Armenians in the foreign countries where they have established themselves as merchants, have all of them stimulated the hopes and aspirations of the more instructed classes, so that one even begins to hear of schemes for the erection of an Armenian state. Russia, of course, frowns upon such schemes, nor can any one think them easy of accomplishment. For the native Armenians are not only poor and unarmed, but cowed by long submission, while there is no European people that has shown any interest in them, or even any sense of the important position they occupy, and the services which they may one day render.

At present Armenia is a mere geographical expression, a name which has come down to us from the ancient world, and has been used at different times with different territorial extensions. The country, if one can call it a country, has no political limits, for it lies mainly in the dominions of Turkey, but partly also in those of Russia and Persia. It has no ethnographical limits, for it is inhabited by Tatars, Persians, Kurds, and the mixed race whom we call Turks or Ottomans, as well as by the Armenians proper. It has no natural boundaries in rivers or mountain chains, lying, as it does, in the upper valleys of the Euphrates, Tigris, Aras, and Kur. Of the numbers of the Armenian nation, or rather of Armenian Christians—for the nation and the church are practically synonymous—no precise estimate can be formed: it is commonly taken at 4,000,000 under Turkish rule,

800,000 under Russian, and 600,000 under Persian; but some think that there are no more than 3,000,000 in Turkey. Others are scattered abroad in all sorts of places—India, Southern Russia, Kabul, Hungary, Abyssinia, Manchester. Wherever they go, they retain their faith, their peculiar physiognomy, their wonderful aptitude for trade.

In Constantinople and most parts of Asia Minor, as well as in Transcaucasia, commerce is to a great extent in their hands; and they are usually found more than a match for either Jews or Greeks. Here, in their own country, however, they are chiefly peaceable, stay-at-home peasants, living in low, mud-built cottages, or sometimes in underground dwellings, tilling the soil just as their ancestors may have done thirty centuries ago, very ignorant, poor, and unambitious, scarcely distinguishable in dress and in some of their habits, except, of course, so far as religion comes in, from the Tatars who are interspersed among but never intermingled with them. Here, in Russian territory, the women go about unveiled, just as in Europe; but I fancy it is otherwise in Turkey and Persia, where, of course, not merely prejudice, but prudence, suggests the concealment of what may attract the notice of some brutal official. There seems, however, to have been a curious old national custom which required women to remain not only secluded but silent for some years after their marriage. According to Baron Haxthausen, an able German who travelled here thirty years ago, the young wife is for a year permitted to speak to no one save her hus-

band, and to him only when they are alone; she may then talk to her baby, and after an interval to her mother-in-law, then to her sister-in-law, next to her sister, last of all to other women, but always in a whisper. After six years, however, though obliged to go out veiled, she enjoys much power and consideration in the household, and if her husband dies, she reigns in his stead. The worthy German approves highly of this practice, not only as tending to increase conjugal devotion, but as rendering possible a system under which the married sons and daughters of a family continue to reside in one household.

"Imagine," says he, "five or six young married women (be it said with all due respect) living together in the same house, should we not anticipate continual quarrels and disturbance and the loss of all authority in the head of the family? No such thing; this danger is removed. Women's quarrels generally arise from the use of women's tongues; and it is not easy to quarrel for any length of time in pantomime, whilst the amusement of the spectators tends to allay (?) any angry feelings. Even afterwards, when freedom of speech is restored, this being carried on in a whisper is unfavourable to quarrelling. In short, to any one who has to manage a large household containing several young women, I could give no better advice than to introduce this Armenian custom." However ancient and laudable this custom may be, it is fast disappearing, and, so far as I learn, now subsists only to this extent, that a bride may not speak to her sisters-in-law for six months after mar-

riage, to her mother-in-law for nine months, and to her father-in-law for eighteen.

It is rather remarkable that whereas serfdom prevailed in Georgia and Mingrelia for many centuries, down till the recent emancipation by Alexander II., there is no trace of its existence in Armenia. Domestic slavery of course there was, as everywhere under Persian and Turkish rule; but all Armenians not slaves were equal: there was neither serf on the one hand nor any noble caste on the other. While every second Georgian you meet calls himself a prince, no Armenian seems now to claim any title of rank (when they used one, it was *ishan* = prince), or has (so far as I know) accepted any from the Czar—an example worthy of imitation in more civilized countries. Some families of course enjoy special respect from their ancient or honourable pedigree; and of these there were a few which in Persian times were exempt from taxation, and were hereditary heads of their villages, responsible to the Shah's viceroy, or to the Armenian Melik of Erivan. This personage was the head of one of these old families, and a sort of national chief or judge, enjoying as much power as the Shah or Sardar for the time being chose to allow him, and often appealed to by his humbler countrymen to compose their differences, or shield them from the tyranny of some Mohammedan official. The Tatars had a Khan at Erivan who corresponded in a measure to this Melik, and was probably a representative of some ancient princely house. All this was, of course, swept away by the Russian conquest: here, as elsewhere, the

centralized bureaucracy of governors and judges appointed by the government is now in full swing.

Physically the Armenians are middle-sized, with a swarthy, yellowish complexion, less yellow, however, than that of the Persians, who are said to be (linguistically) their nearest relatives, black, straight hair, a forehead rather wide than high, and a large nose. The women are often handsome, with an erect carriage, regular features, and fine dark eyes. The language they now speak differs widely from that in which their ancient literature, dating from the fourth century, is preserved, and in which their worship is still conducted. They call it, and themselves, Haik, claiming to be descended from an eponymous hero Haik, who was the brother of Karthlos, ancestor of the Georgians, and the son of Thorgamos or Thogarmah, who was the son of Gomer the son of Japhet. It belongs to the Iranian group of the Indo-European family, and is said to be copious and strong, though certainly not melodious. Besides the ecclesiastical writings of the earlier middle age, the best known of which is the history of Moses of Chorene, there exist in the old tongue some ancient ballads, several of them containing versions of the Persian legends of Zal and Rustum. The earliest inscriptions found in the country are in a cuneiform character; somewhat later, in Græco-Roman times, the Greek alphabet was used by the Western, the Syriac by the Eastern Armenians, until, in the beginning of the fifth century, St. Mesrop invented the present Armenian character, and thereby, it has been thought, gave a considerable

impetus to the independent national feeling of the people. He wrote in it his Armenian translation of the Gospels, now accounted the model of the old tongue in its purity, but barely intelligible to one who knows only the modern vernacular, the origin of which, or rather the disuse of the ancient language in literary composition, is commonly assigned to the fourteenth century, when the Turkish and Mongol invasions had destroyed what little learning or wealth had been left in the country. There exist a certain number of recent ballads, sung to national airs, and some of these airs have considerable sweetness, unlike the church music, which is singularly harsh and unmelodious.

In the southern and western parts of Asia Minor, the Armenians generally speak either Turkish or dialects of their own tongue much corrupted by Turkish; but the establishment of schools among them is calling Armenian back into use, and notably strengthening their national sentiment. These schools and the funds of the churches are in each community managed by a local council, elected by universal suffrage. The Armenians whom I saw boasted that in no church was the lay element stronger than in theirs; even the election of the local priest is entirely in the hands of the people. In points of doctrine and ritual the Armenian Church is extremely conservative, and has been wise or fortunate enough to avoid defining her faith with the particularity which has produced so many schisms farther west. She has never committed herself to Monophysite views,

although, chiefly owing to a national jealousy of Constantinople, she refused to accept the decrees of Chalcedon; she has not formally expressed herself on the subject of purgatory or the invocation of saints, although the latter is of course practised; she has avoided the use of any word corresponding to the term transubstantiation, so that practically a considerable diversity of opinion regarding the Eucharist might prevail among her members.

The vigorous life which still dwells in the Armenian race, and makes one expect more from it than from any other of the Transcaucasian peoples, has chiefly expressed itself in practical directions, most of all (as has been said already) in money-making. Many Armenians, however, have entered the civil or military service of Russia, as well as that of Turkey (where, unhappily, their reputation as officials is not very creditable; it is an old remark that the faults of a subject race come out worst when they are put in power over their fellows), and some have risen to posts of high dignity. For instance, the commander of the invading Russian army in Asia at this moment, General Loris Melikoff, is an Armenian, as is the present governor of Daghestan. Their family, properly Melikian[1] (*ian* is a patronymic in Armenian, like Mac or Ap), is one of the oldest and most re-

[1] Melik is of course the old Semitic word for king, which appears in the Melchi Zedek of Genesis. It is the same as Malek, or Melek (Adram Melech, Abi Melech), and has now come to mean prince or merely landowner in the Eastern countries. (See a learned and interesting essay by Sir E. Colebrooke on imperial and other titles in East and West, reprinted from the 'Transactions of the Asiatic Society,' 1877.)

spectable in Armenia. There are, I believe, thirty other Armenian generals in the service of the Czar.[1] Russia is wise not only in turning Armenian ability to account, but in thus giving an open career to ambition, which might otherwise find a vent in intrigues or disaffection.

There is a considerable stirring of intellectual, even of literary activity, among the Armenians, both here and in Constantinople. They see that the time has come to make their voice heard in the world, and to claim (however little prospect there seems to be of their obtaining it) for their unhappy co-religionists in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey some share in Western sympathy. Nothing can be more pitiable than the condition of these poor people. They are not only (like the Rayahs of Bosnia and Bulgaria) plundered and outraged by rapacious tax gatherers and zaptiehs, they are also constantly exposed to the robberies of the marauding Kurds, who live among them, roving over the mountains in summer, and in winter descending to quarter themselves upon the Christian villagers, where they slay and pillage to their heart's content. The Ottoman Porte has not the power, even if it had the will, to interfere. In fact, the sheep-dogs are little better than the wolves: the burning and plunder of the bazaar at Van, last winter, was the work, according to the uncontradicted narrative that reached this country, not so much of Kurds as of Turkish soldiers. Why, it may be asked, do the Armenians not rise in rebel-

[1] Generals Tergukasof and Lazaref are said to be also Armenians.

lion against these outrages, as their forefathers did against the Seleucids or the Parthians? Partly because they are unarmed, partly because the population is thin, with Tatars, Kurds, and Ottomans scattered among them, but mainly because ages of slavery have broken the spirit of the nation, because there is no one to lead them, no means of combined action, no such prospect of sympathy or support from European powers as even the people of Herzegovina or Bulgaria might have looked for. The same causes, it will be argued, unfit them for independence or self-government. True enough; none of the subject races of Turkey is now fit for self-government. But the question is not so much whether they are fit as rather whether any sort of self-government, however bad, must not be better than the kind of tyranny from which they now suffer, and whose bitterness is in a measure intensified by comparison with the peace and security enjoyed by their countrymen under the rule of Russia. The alternative to some sort of independence for the Turkish Armenians is absorption by Russia, who already uses her position as sovereign and defender of the Patriarch to claim a sort of protectorship over the whole Church. Without being actually discontented, however, the Armenian subjects of Russia are not devoted or zealous subjects, while those who live under Turkey look on her just as the Bulgarians do. Better the Czar than the Sultan, is the feeling of both; but better any sort of local independence than either Czar or Sultan. Their remote geographical position renders it difficult for

any Western power to help them, and seems even to have made us comparatively callous to their wrongs, though why European Slavs should be really any juster objects of sympathy than Asiatic Armenians, it would be hard to say. For the present, help and deliverance seem to be far away from the Armenians of Turkey. But whoever considers their history, and marks the signs of awakening life they now show, cannot but believe that better days are in store for them. A race that has endured so stedfastly must have bone and sinew in it. Whether it will develop a civilization of its own no one can predict; but, when once the dying tyranny that has cursed it is dead, it may fairly hope, with its industry, frugality, and quick intelligence, to restore prosperity to countries which war and oppression have made almost a desert.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM ERIVAN TO THE BLACK SEA.

BEFORE taking leave of Armenia, I wish to say a few words about the Kurds, who dwell scattered among the other inhabitants through nearly the whole of its area, and have recently won for themselves a horrible fame by the massacres which they are using their service under the Sultan's banner to perpetrate. They are a remarkable race: indeed, of all that we saw on our journey, their encampment on Ararat interested me most. For there is something very striking in coming for the first time upon that nomad life which still prevails over so large a part of our globe, and once prevailed even more widely. The Kurds are only one, though perhaps the most important, of a great diversity of wild tribes who occupy Western Asia, and dwell interspersed among settled agricultural peoples, all through the upper parts of Asia Minor and the border lands of Turkey and Persia. From Ala Göz, whose pastures mark their northern limit, their encampments may be occasionally found as far south as the neighbourhood of Bagdad and Aleppo; a friend tells me he has even seen them among the temples of Baalbec. To the east they go as far as Urumia; to the west, as Sivas and Kaisariyeh

in Anatolia. Though a part of this wide area is called Kurdistan upon our maps, they are nowhere its sole inhabitants. Tatars, or Osmanli Turks, or Persians, or Armenians, always occupy the valleys and towns, while they cling to the heights, seldom or never taking to agriculture, but living on the milk and flesh of their flocks. Their number has been guessed at a million; of course there are no means of ascertaining it. In person they are mostly rather stout and strongly built than tall, with splendid chests and arms, swarthy complexions, small deep-set eyes of blue or grey, black hair, and a large mouth. The women, who are freer and more independent than those of Persia and Turkey, and are even said to have separate property, do most of the work; robbery is the favourite pursuit of the men, whose dark faces and fierce restless glance give them a menacing appearance that does not belie their character. Nevertheless, those who know them best believe them to be a race of great natural gifts, apter to learn than Tatars and more vigorous in action than Persians. They are certainly much less fanatical: indeed, many (not to speak of those Nestorian Christians who are said to belong to this race, nor of the Yezidis, or so-called devil worshippers) have the reputation of being very indifferent Muslims. It is a proverb among their neighbours that no saint will ever come out of Kurdistan.[1] In fact, the

[1] During the great Mohammedan fast of Ramazan, when everyone is bound to abstain from all kinds of nourishment or stimulant from sunrise to sunset, the Kurds allow themselves to smoke in the day-time, alleging that tobacco was unknown in the Prophet's day, and therefore cannot have been forbidden by him.

theology of many consists chiefly in a belief in Jinn, Peris, and Sheyts (devils). It is not from religious hatred, but simply in the exercise of their profession of robbers, that they are the scourge of the Armenian peasantry, whose villages they often attack and plunder. Some of those of higher rank learn Arabic in order to read the Koran; they have, I fancy, no literature of their own, except wild songs; but their national airs are described as being not only melodious, but full of a pathetic melancholy. Their tongue, of which there are many widely diverse dialects, is, so far as I can ascertain, a distinct branch of the Iranian family, though it has adopted a good many Persian words; so probably there is no basis for the belief that they are a primitive Turanian people, representing those so-called Accadian races with whom the early Assyrians came in contact, and from whom Nineveh seems to have learnt its magic and a good deal of its religion.

The first authentic mention of them seems to be that which we find in the Anabasis of Xenophon, who describes the furious resistance offered to the passage of the Ten Thousand Greeks by the Karduchi of the Upper Tigris, about 150 miles south of Ararat. They were then quite independent of the Great King, and carried on constant war with their neighbours, especially the satrap or prince of Armenia. Nor does it appear that they were ever really subdued by any succeeding potentate, Macedonian or Parthian, Arab or Turk. Later writers call them Gordyeni or Kordueni; a word which appears also in the Hebrew name

Qardu for the country north-east of Mosul, referred to in a preceding chapter. Their name for themselves is said to be Kart or Kartman. At present they profess a sort of loose allegiance to the Sultan, but are practically their own masters, paying little or no tribute, and divided into small clans, each of which obeys its own chief. Individually valiant fighters, they have too little idea of discipline or concerted action to be valuable in war; and though news comes (June 1877) that they are gathering to attack the Russian armies in Armenia, it will be surprising if their alliance proves of any real service to the Turks. Those who now dwell in Russian territory, and who number about 10,000, live pretty peaceably, and occasionally, like our friend Jaafar, take service with the stranger, just as the great Saladin, the only world-famous man whom the Kurdish race has produced, did in the armies of the Seljukian princes. One likes to fancy that among the effete races of Asia some future may yet be in store for these vigorous mountaineers, who have never bowed to a foreign conqueror.

Of our journey back from Erivan to Tiflis, there is little to tell that is worth the telling; for we were obliged, having the tarantass as a loan from a friend at Tiflis, to travel with it along a reasonably good road, and the only such road was the one we had come by. Else we should have preferred to cross the mountains on horseback, by a track which passes over the skirts of Ala Göz, or to take, going still farther west, the route through Alexandropol and the valley of the upper Kur, by which the Russians send

most of their troops to operate in Armenia. As it was, we traversed for the second time the dreary uplands that lie north of Erivan and the stern, silent shores of the Goktcha lake. Only this was gained, that we were now able to see something of one of the prettiest bits of scenery on the whole route; I mean the lovely wooded glen which leads from the pass down to the village of Delijan, and which in coming we had passed through at night. As this glen is a famous place for robbers, my experiences there may be worth mentioning. Descending it in the dusk, I had walked on alone before the tarantass, and was taking short cuts from one angle of the winding road to another, when the vehicle with my companions in it passed me, and went on ahead, leaving me ten miles to walk. Night fell before I had got far, and with night there appeared an unexpected annoyance in the shape of fierce dogs, which darted out when I passed a dwelling. Every woodman or peasant keeps several of these creatures, of a ferocity that has been famous since the time of Strabo, who says they were able to pull down a lion. Something of this strength they have certainly lost in the eighteen centuries since then, but it was not without difficulty that I could keep them at bay by volleys of stones. They can hardly have taken me for a robber, because the robbers are on excellent terms with the peasantry. I reached Delijan at last, pretty well exhausted, for I was suffering from a violent headache, but at any rate satisfied that the roads of Transcaucasia were safe as far as human enemies were concerned, since here was

a solitary traveller on foot, evidently a stranger, passing unmolested through a solitary wooded glen, whose reputation for robberies was, as every one after our arrival told us, specially bad. This was on Saturday. What was our surprise to hear on the following Monday forenoon that there had been that morning an outrageous robbery in this very glen of two Tiflis merchants, who were seized by a band, and stripped of everything they possessed. Was it true? We could never make out; but it was reported in all the Tiflis newspapers, and everybody believed it.

The same Monday night, having driven all day down the exquisite valley of the Akstafa river, and over the barren steppe of the Kur, we crossed the Red Bridge just after sunset, and at the next station were of course met by the usual tales of brigands. There had been a band about here lately, and several travellers had been stopped. Only yesterday somebody coming this way from Tiflis had seen one or two armed horsemen peering round a hillside, and had escaped them only by galloping to the station, which luckily was near. After this, it was urged by the postmaster, to go on at night would be downright folly. Such is the perversity of human nature that the more these stories were told, the less we believed them; and probably we should have disbelieved them altogether could the usual innkeeper's motive have been discovered. But a Russian postmaster is not an innkeeper: he supplies you with nothing but the indispensable *samovar* (urn) to boil water for your tea. We listened to these narratives while consuming tea

and our last hard-boiled egg; and the food, such as it was, was all our own, for the postmaster had none to give us. If you lie down on the post-house floor, you do not pay for the accommodation, but may go on lying there gratis till he chooses to find horses, which, of course, he is usually reluctant to do. In this instance he did not pretend that there was a scarcity of horses, and, as I now on reflection believe, may really have thought we were running some risk. We persisted, however, and he eased his mind by sending a *tchapar* with us as an escort. Next station the same drama was acted over again. The same stories reappeared; the same advice was even more solemnly tendered. However, it was now near midnight, Tiflis was only two hours away, and our impatience to rest in a civilized bed instead of on a post-house floor made us ready to face dangers more substantial than these seemed to be. "No," we answered; "you may say what you like, but we shall go on; to-night shall see us either murdered or in Tiflis. But if it is any satisfaction to you, or protection to us, give us two or three tchapars to ride beside the tarantass." To this the postmaster demurred, and, after beating about the bush for a good while, at last muttered, "We are more afraid of our own people for you than of the Tatars." After this there was no more to be said; we called for horses, and drove off alone, amid many warnings, first that we would be brought back stripped and wounded, and, secondly, that even if we escaped the band, some stray marauder would certainly climb on to the carriage as we entered Tiflis,

and cut away the portmanteau which was tied behind. Nothing, however, happened, except that once or twice in the darkness, for it was as black as a wolf's mouth, with thunderstorms growling in the distance, we ran into Tatar carts making for the city, and were nearly capsized. At 2 A.M. we entered Tiflis, and took possession of our old quarters there.

Three days spent in the capital, which seemed more of an oven than ever, made us not unwilling to set our faces homewards, since it appeared that the expedition through Daghestan we had meditated would occupy a fortnight at least, more time than my friend could spare. There are but two ways of getting from Tiflis to Europe, the one that we had followed in coming, across the Dariel Pass and by railway to the Sea of Azof, the other by rail to Poti on the Black Sea. This latter line, opened in 1872, is the only railway in Transcaucasia; and now that Russia has, by going to war, debarred herself for some time to come from projects of internal improvement, it is likely long to remain so. Three other lines, however, have been projected which would mightily open up the country. One of these is across the mountains from Tiflis to Vladikavkaz, avoiding the top of the Dariel Pass by a tunnel a little to the east of the present road. A second is from Tiflis to the Persian frontier, near Tavriz, passing through Erivan. This would give a stimulus to the trade with Persia, and would not be difficult of construction except in one section, that over the mountains north of the Goktcha lake. The third is from Tiflis to Baku on the Caspian. This is

the necessary completion of the Black Sea line, and is much the most likely to be carried out, especially as it runs over a level country, where bridging the rivers is the only difficulty. It would greatly strengthen Russia's military position, as well as increase her Caspian trade, and would indeed leave Persia pretty much at her mercy. However, Persia is that already; if the Russians are foolish enough to wish to annex in that direction, they may do so when they please.

Desiring to see something of the coast of Asia Minor, and especially of Batum and Trebizond, we chose the route by Poti, and on the 22nd of September took our seats in the train for the Black Sea. There is but one in the day, which leaves at 9.30 A.M., and is due at Poti about 11 P.M., the distance being 191 miles. The station at Tiflis lies a good bit out of the town, beyond the German colony, but the houses are creeping out towards it. There may have been, besides soldiers, some forty passengers, few of whom, however, were going through. Running up the valley of the Kur, we soon passed Mtzkhet, the ancient capital of Georgia, with its ruins scattered over the promontory between the Kur and the Aragva, in the midst of which rise two stately old churches, one of them the patriarchal cathedral of old Georgia. For Mtzkhet is admittedly the oldest city in the country. It was founded by Mtzkhetos, son of Karthlos, the eponymous hero of the Georgian race, who was fourth in descent from Noah through Japhet, Gomer, and Thogarmah, and brother of Haik, the ancestor of the Armenians. The Georgian annals present a long

string of monarchs from these patriarchs downwards, which after all are just as authentic as George Buchanan's early kings of Scotland, or the dynasties of the Odin-descended Ynglings in Scandinavia, or most noble pedigrees in our own country. Anyhow, whether Mtzkhet is really the oldest city in the world or not, it is a place of vast antiquity, having unquestionably existed long before Tiflis, which sprang up in the fourth century A.D., was heard of. Tradition fixes it as the spot where Karthlos was buried, where stood a great image of Ormazd, whose worship had been introduced from Persia, and where St. Nina, whose cross of vine sticks was long preserved in the cathedral, converted the Iberian king and people to Christianity. In the cliff of soft rock which borders the river, innumerable caves have been hollowed out, evidently by hand, and were probably inhabited before any buildings rose on the flat above. Similar rock-dwellings appear at intervals all the way up the valley of the Kur, not mere scattered hermits' nests, but mostly crowded together to form a sort of troglodyte village.

Above Mtzkhet the railway, keeping along the southern bank of the river, enters a long defile between hills, which are sometimes wooded to their base, sometimes descend to the narrow bottom of the valley in precipices from forty to one hundred feet high. The scenery is pretty without being grand. What most strikes one is the great strength of the gorge in a military point of view. Fearing no enemy here, the Russians have not thought it worth their while to fortify, but even a small force could hold a much

larger one in check in this valley, which effectually separates the upper basin of the Kur from the lowlands stretching from Tiflis to the Caspian. After a good many miles of this narrow glen, the hills recede a little, and the town of Gori appears lying in a small plain at the foot of a castellated rock, where a broad shallow stream comes down from the Caucasus to mingle its sparkling waters with the muddy Kur. Here, a little before one o'clock, we left the train, meaning to catch the corresponding one next day, drove into the town which is half a mile away, found quarters at a humble inn lately set up by an Armenian, and after a while went round to present ourselves to the German apothecary, Mr. Schoff, to whom, as the representative of learning and culture in the place, we had brought a letter of introduction from Tiflis. Much to our pleasure, we found not only the Herr Apotheker himself, who belonged to one of the "colonial families" of Tiflis, but a hearty welcome from his wife, a Franco-German lady, who spoke excellent English. Mr. Schoff led us through the modest bazaar to visit the one sight of Gori, its castle perched on a rock that rises abruptly out of a plain so flat that you cannot help supposing it to have been a lake bed, drained off when the ravine through which the Kur forces its downward way was formed. From the top of the rock, nearly 200 feet above this plain, there is a magnificent view over the Caucasus to the north, most of the great peaks between Elbruz and Kazbek being visible. We, however, were in ill-luck here, as we had been at Pjätigorsk, on the other side of

the chain. There was, as there often is in this valley, a violent gale blowing from the west, but the mountains were covered with such thick low-lying clouds that the snows could not be seen, only a long line of forest-covered heights. The position is so strong and commanding that a fortress may well be believed to have existed here from the remotest times; but it is impossible to say what date ought to be ascribed to the existing walls. In the midst of them stands a small and very ancient church, now used as a powder magazine by the Russian garrison. The natives call it the Golden Hill, saying that here the emperor Heraclius kept his treasures in the great war he waged with Persia.

The town below is a poor place, with a bazaar consisting of two or three arcades, and but slight traces of its former greatness in several old churches, one of which shows a sacred picture presented by Justinian. Its population, which is under 4000, consists mainly of Armenians, who abound in the country places as well as in the towns all up this part of the Kur valley, and keep themselves distinct from the Georgians. The climate is much cooler than that of Tiflis, and the environs prettier, so that people have often regretted that Gori was not made the capital of Transcaucasia when the Russians crossed the mountains, especially as Tiflis had been shortly before reduced to ruins by the Persian invaders of 1795. Now that so many public buildings have been erected at Tiflis, it is too late to make a change.

The evening was pleasantly spent in discourse with

our host and his wife. He was evidently one of the chief people in the town, having been appointed to his place of state apothecary by the government, which, I suppose, considers the supply of medicines a matter of public interest; and he possessed a good knowledge of natural history. At 6.30 A.M. next morning we started in his company for the place we had halted at Gori to see, the Petra of the Caucasus, the rock-city of Uphlis Tzikhé. It lies about five miles off to the east-south-east, a distance which it took our vehicle nearly two hours to traverse, so rough was the track along the hillside. This telega was the most primitive form of cart we had met with, consisting of a simple flat board upon wheels, with neither sides nor seats. We sat on the edge, letting our legs dangle over, an arrangement which had the advantage of enabling us to drop off readily when the way became more than usually hilly or rocky. Except for the name of the thing, we should have gone faster on our own legs, and the air was so fresh up here that the morning sun need not have harmed us. However, gentility before everything is the rule in the Caucasus as elsewhere, even when gentility consists in riding in a cart. Much of the land in this valley seems to be left untilled; what we crossed was mostly open brown steppe, like that of the hills round Tiflis, on which the withered stems of the weeds that cover it were rattling in the wind. There was not a house the whole way till we came to a tiny cluster of huts, surrounding a rude old church, above which, to the east, rose a ridge of broken crags running down towards

the Kur, which flowed along the valley to the south. Here the Armenian priest of the place, living in a slightly superior hut, which boasted two rooms and a picture of the Virgin, received us, and gave us, as guides, his assistant and the head of the village, an intelligent old peasant. They led us up the face of the crags by a steep winding path, partly built up of stones, partly cut out of the cliff, to the top, where we found ourselves suddenly in the midst of the city, a city with streets, palaces, shops, private houses, all hewn in the solid rock without a fragment of masonry or a piece of timber anywhere through it. The sloping side of a hill, or what might rather be called a broad tongue of rocks projecting from the ridge behind, and descending southwards towards the Kur pretty steeply (though much less steeply than the western face of this tongue up which we had climbed), has been honeycombed with grottoes large and small, some mere holes, like those in the cliffs at Mtzkhet, but many of them regular houses, with large and handsome chambers, and smaller rooms opening off these. Two in particular struck me, not more by their size than by their architectural style and the finish of their ornament. One was a hall 28 feet long by 26 feet wide, and about 20 feet high, in the centre of which there had stood two columns, the ornamental bases of which, and a piece at the top adhering to the ceiling, were all that remained, the middle part having been broken away. Along the ceiling, both here and in several other dwellings, there run beams of stone, that is to say, the rock has been carved into the shape

of beams, obviously for ornament, and in imitation of the beams of a wooden house. These beams are crossed at right angles by rafters hewn in the rock, the workmanship very fine and true, though simple. This apartment is open in front towards the east: at the back a short flight of steps leads up to a sort of gallery under three arches, from one end of which there is a passage into two smaller rooms of equal height, with windows looking down the western cliff. The other house, which faces to the south, commanding a noble view of the Kur valley, is somewhat smaller than the last, and about 20 feet high: its ceiling is vaulted into a dome, and adorned with deep octagonal mouldings, not unlike those of the Pantheon at Rome, while the arch which forms the entrance is surmounted by a pointed gable, running back to the solid rock behind. Between the top lines of this gable front and the arch there were pilastres hewn and other bits of ornament, which the weather has destroyed. There was nothing to indicate how the front of these chambers was closed, whether by long wooden doors, or by walls of rock or of loose stone, which may have been since destroyed. These two are only the largest and most perfect out of a mass of dwellings, standing close to one another all over the slope, the roofs of the lower forming the streets in front of the higher, just as in the modern Georgian and Osset villages which one sees built on the steep declivity of a hill. Channels to carry off the rain water run along the streets or beside the flights of steps which connect a lower street with one above

it. About halfway down the hillside one finds a long, winding, subterranean passage cut through the rock, which leads down to the river flowing at the bottom, and which was no doubt so constructed for the sake of defence. By it the inhabitants could supply themselves with water from the river, while in time of war it might be closed, or at least defended more easily than an open way. Steps were cut all the way down this tunnel, but in many places they have disappeared. This was the only approach from below, as the path we climbed by on the west side of the cliff is quite modern. On that side the place presented escarpments which made attack impossible; it was probably protected by walls on the north and east. The rock is a comparatively recent sandstone, whose strata dip to the south (i.e. away from the Caucasian axis) at an angle of about 20 degrees. It is mostly fine-grained, but occasionally coarse, passing into a kind of conglomerate with pebbles of quartz imbedded.

The city is not large, covering, perhaps, only some six or eight acres of ground, but every part of its area is covered with these dwellings, nor is there one of them, except a small brick church, which shews any trace of masonry. The church is, therefore, probably later in date than the other edifices, though it is obviously very ancient; and this favours the idea that the city itself must be assigned to pre-Christian times, that is to say, to some time before the fourth century of our era, when the Georgian kings embraced Christianity. So far as I know, there is absolutely

nothing else on which a conjecture as to its age can be based. The Georgian annals ascribe its foundation to a mythical king Uphlos (*uphlos* means "lord" in Georgian, and *tzikhé* "fortress"), who was the son of Mtzkhetos, the son of Karthlos, the eponymous patriarch of the Georgian nation; and then, making a leap, they tell us that it was a fortress of note in the third century B.C., when they bring Alexander the Great into these countries.[1] The resemblance which the style of decoration bears to that of Georgian and Armenian buildings of the tenth and succeeding centuries would lead one to believe that it belonged to that time, when Georgia was a tolerably civilized country, rather than to the savage ages, when men dwelt in caves like those in the cliff at Mtzkhet, or like the rude grottoes which line the banks of the Upper Kur at Vardsi, on the borders of Armenia.[2] The absence of a church might be explained by supposing that in some of the numerous invasions which have wasted this country it has been destroyed, as many of the edifices of Uphlis Tzikhé certainly

[1] I need hardly say that Alexander never was here; the only Caucasus he saw was the so-called Indian Caucasus or Hindoo Koosh of Afghanistan, which is supposed to have been then called Caucasus by his flatterers, wishing to parallel his exploits with those of Hercules, who went to the Caucasus to liberate Prometheus.

[2] One of these grottoes at Vardsi is a chapel, adorned with rude frescoes, and attributed to Queen Tamara; but of course it may be later than the other caves, which were probably used in her time by hermits as a sort of rock monastery like those of the Thebaid. In Russian Armenia, among the mountains east of Erivan, there are some remarkable little churches and tombs hewn in the rock. Probably the habit of constructing grottoes was a general one in these countries, clung to even when a knowledge of architecture was considerably advanced.

have. One thing is at least clear. The people who lived here were no mere brutish troglodytes, but a cultivated race, with an appreciation of architectural beauty, and workmen capable of executing fine designs with truth and grace. They were evidently familiar with large wooden houses—witness the beams in the ceilings—with the column, and even with the arch. Was it then fashion, or adherence to ancient custom, or the needs of defence, that led them to create a city of caves like this; not in a woodless land such as that which lies round Idumaean Petra, but within sight of the sumptuous forests of the Caucasus?

Returning to Gori, we took the mid-day train, the same which had brought us from Tiflis yesterday, for the west. We had very nearly missed it, for the ticket for the luggage we had left at the station had been lost; and we were obliged to find an interpreter, and through him make a piteous appeal to the railway officials to let us have the goods despite the want of the ticket. Such an appeal would have failed in France or Germany; but with these good-natured people it ultimately succeeded, and they even kept the train, the one train of the day, full of officers and troops, waiting for fifteen minutes while this difficulty of ours was adjusted; an instance of indulgence to unpopular England which a little surprised us.

The line follows the Kur through an open, bare, flat-bottomed valley up to a place where a road runs off southward to Borjom, the summer residence of the Grand Duke, and most fashionable of all the Cauca-

sian hill-stations. Up beyond it, on the way to Armenia, the government has planted another "odd lot" of Russian Dissenters, somewhat similar to our Molokan friends, called the Duchobortz. Here a large part of the passengers, and most of the soldiers, left the train, and here, unhappily, rain came on, which destroyed our chance of seeing the snowy range to the north. A little farther, about three o'clock, we reached Suram, an ancient town with an ancient castle, standing at the foot of the ridge which divides the basin of the Kur, whose waters seek the Caspian, from those of the Rion flowing towards the Black Sea. It connects the Caucasus on the north with the great mountain system of Taurus and Armenia to the south. As has been remarked in an earlier chapter, this ridge has also a great meteorological importance, for on the one side it obstructs the cold dry winds from the inner continent of Asia, and on the other side arrests the rain clouds coming up from the Black Sea, thus increasing the warmth and humidity of Imeritia and Mingrelia on its western side, while it leaves to Georgia and the steppes towards the Caspian an arid soil and a climate of extremes, hotter in summer than the Euxine coast, and far colder in winter. This ridge was the great difficulty encountered by the Poti-Tiflis railroad. The English engineers who made the line proposed to tunnel through it, but the Russians shrank from the cost, and characteristically preferred the plan of carrying the line over the top, which is likely to involve far more expense in the long run. Every year the

winter snows and spring storms do mischief which interrupts the traffic and requires large repairs; while the risk of a mishap on the steep incline was declared by the engineers themselves to be serious. This incline is one of the steepest, if not the steepest (excluding, of course, the Rigi line), in the Old World: 1 in.20. The train is pulled up by a Fairlie engine, of course at a slow pace, and descends also very slowly and cautiously. No bad accident has happened yet; I suppose more people are killed at Preston station, which is generally accounted the worst in England, in a month than on the Transcaucasian railway in a year.

This ridge, though of so much consequence both in a climatic and an engineering point of view, is not very high, not 1000 feet above the village of Suram, and only 3600 feet above the sea. Its upper part is covered with beech woods, which are especially tall and luxuriant on the western side, where the railway descends with terrific steepness into the deep valleys of Imeritia. Nothing can be more beautiful, or less like the scenery round Tiflis, than the long, narrow, winding glens, hemmed in by bold cliffs of sandstone and limestone, through which the line finds its way, crossing and recrossing the foaming stream, to the wider vale of the Kvirilla, the principal affluent of the Rion or Phasis. Ruined castles stand out upon nodding crags, which are draped with wood and tufts of luxuriant fern, while up the gorges one has glimpses of forest-covered mountains rising behind, and now and then a snowy peak appearing far to the north. It is a country

apparently so difficult for military operations that one is at a loss to understand how so many armies should have marched through it, to and fro, from the days of Pompey downwards. At Kvirilla station you come out upon a rich undulating plain, where the wretched log huts of the peasantry are hardly discernible through the tall maize and sumptuous vines that climb among the fruit trees. Here, unhappily, we lost the daylight, for it was now seven o'clock, and lost also the company of a young Englishwoman, whose conversation had enlivened the journey since the station beyond Suram, on the other side of the pass. She was the wife of an English superintendent of rolling stock, who, with two other Englishmen, was the last left out of the host of our countrymen who had been employed upon the making and working of the railway. Most of them had perished by the fevers of the deadly plain we were entering, to which their intemperate habits made them easy victims. The rest had returned to England, having saved but little, as she told us, out of the high pay they received. She was a Clitheroe woman, with a strong Lancashire accent, which sounded pleasant in this strange land; a sensible, vigorous person, whose naïve account of the life she led among these Russians, Armenians, and Georgians, her contempt for their superstitions, her repulsion from the Russian tendency to spend what they make in a little temporary display, or to gamble it away, her exhortations to her husband to make the most, by thrift and sobriety, of the risks whith he was running in this climate—exhortations which, I believe, the worthy man followed—

gave a pleasant picture of a hearty English character retaining its practical sense and domestic instincts under depressing conditions.

We saw no more of the country, and should have seen little even by day, for the clouds had settled down with a drenching rain which beat against the carriage windows. The air grew foul and heavy as we entered, about 10 P.M., the great dismal swamp which extends twenty-five miles up the course of the Rion from the sea. We tried to read, but were too stupid to keep awake, and fell into a slumber broken by hideous dreams. About midnight the lagging train crawled at last into the terminus at Poti, and we drove, under the blackest night I can remember, across the wooden bridge, through seas of mud, to the miserable inn of the most miserable town that ever a traveller was condemned to halt in. Better a hungry bivouac under the snows of Ararat than those dank bed-rooms and clammy sheets, heavy with such a smell of putrid slime that one feared to lift the frowsy carpet and find beneath it a bottomless abyss of foulness. We comforted ourselves with the thought that it was only for a night, though, to be sure, one night would be enough to give the fever, which he who sleeps in Poti seldom escapes, and that next day we should be heaving on those billows of the Euxine whose hoarse roar upon the strand sounded above the lashing rain.

Alas for next morning and those roaring billows! The first news that greeted us was that, with such a surf breaking on the sands, it would be impossible for

the little steamer that lay in the river to cross the shallow bar, so that we were prisoners here till the sea fell, and perhaps for a fortnight. For the steamers which run from Poti to Constantinople and Odessa leave only once a week, and, as they can neither enter the so-called harbour of Poti nor wait outside in the open sea, are forced to lie, the one at Batum, thirty miles to the south, the other at Sukhum Kaleh, twice as far to the north, whither passengers are conveyed by tenders drawing only four feet of water. Each steamer gives thirty-six hours of grace, and, if the tender does not appear by that time, sails on her watery way, leaving the luckless passengers to sicken of fever at Poti before the next one comes. This was cheering. But there was no mistake about the facts. We walked to a point on the artificially raised bank of the river, the only elevated spot in Poti, which is so flat that you literally cannot see where you are, and watched the lordly breakers foaming on the beach half a mile off. We saw the tender lying in the stream, without even a fire in her furnace, and were told by the captain that he could not think of trying the bar. We asked every French- or German-speaking creature we could find whether there was anything that could be done, and were told that nothing could be done except to wait, and that at this time of year, when the weather once broke, it usually continued to blow and rain for days, possibly weeks, together, so that it was likely enough that we might not get out to even the next following steamer, which was due a week from now. We watched

the wind swaying the tops of the melancholy poplars, and vainly tried to persuade ourselves that it was going down. We enquired whether a smack could not be hired to carry us to Batum or Trebizond, but it was agreed that no smack would venture out. Besides, there were none. We thought of getting horses to ride along the coast to Batum—that very coast where the Russian troops have lately been checked in several bloody fights by the Turks—but it turned out that there was no road across the frontier, only hills and pathless swamps. So at last we settled down to the conclusion that, if the bar continued impracticable to-morrow, there was nothing for it but to retrace our steps to Tiflis, and go home over the Dariel Pass, and by railway from Vladikavkaz to Odessa, a circuit of about eleven hundred miles. This seemed too absurd to be true; but those to whom we turned for advice agreed that it was the only alternative. Having at last, then, reached a conclusion, and seeing that there was nothing for British energy to do, we thought of Mark Tapley in the swamps of Eden, which must have been rather like Poti, only pleasanter, and set ourselves to see the sights of the place.

Sights, however, there were none. There is a wretched sort of market, consisting of some booths set down in an ocean of mud, where ill-flavoured grapes and rotting plums are exposed for sale among crockery and hardware even coarser than one generally finds in Russia. Some languid Mingrelians were lounging about, but nobody seemed to have anything to do; nothing, except a little fruit, was bought or

sold. Every street, if these roads with wooden shanties placed here and there along them could be called streets, was as wretched as the last, and when the squalls of rain drove us into the inn again, even its bare walls and empty rooms seemed better than the melancholy folk who are so thoroughly in harmony with their dwelling-place. My friend, who is as near perfection as a human creature can be, has but one fault. He is a determined optimist, and has many a time disheartened his companions by attempts to put the best face on things when there was no good face to be put on them. But Poti was too much for him. We both relapsed into a moody silence, and not a word more was said about the bar.

The river, white with the mud of Caucasian glaciers, is as wide as the Thames at Kingston, with, of course, far more water, but somewhat sluggish for the last thirty or forty miles of its course through the flats. It used to fall into the sea south of the site of the present town, at a place where there is still a big lagoon called Palaeostom (old mouth), whose borders are said to be, if possible, more pestilential than the town itself. An ingenious friend of mine who has been at Poti insists that the Dragon[1] in the Argonautic tale symbolizes the poisonous marshes of the neighbourhood, and that Jason was really a skilful Greek engineer who drained them, and whom King Aeëtes, like many Oriental princes since his day, refused to pay for the work, so

[1] It certainly is true that this very common legend of the dragon who infests the neighbourhood of a city, and is killed by a young hero, is generally found in places where there are swamps which formerly bred disease.

that he was obliged to pay himself and decamp with his navvies. If this be so, I can only say that things are ripe for another Jason.

The houses are one-storied and nearly all of wood. Ponds have established themselves in permanence along the sides of the streets and roads, soaking through from the river, which is above their level; in fact, the town stands in water and out of water; marshes around it for many miles each way, and west winds bestowing upon it 62 inches of rain in the year. It is the paradise of frogs, whose croak is heard all day and all night; and wild boars find themselves at home in the swamps, where they are rarely disturbed. In such an atmosphere, everything falls to pieces; so it is perhaps not so wonderful that in this town, which has been a town ever since the time when Medea eloped from it with Jason, where the Greeks trafficked with the Colchian kings, and the Romans had a fortress (called Phasis, whence the name Poti), and the Genoese a factory, there should be now only one relic of antiquity, the ruined gate of a Turkish fort captured and dismantled by the Russians in 1829. Up till that time, though the Czar had been established in Imeritia since 1810,[1] the Mingrelian coast had been retained by Turkey, who, however, made no use of it except for the purposes of the brisk slave trade she kept up with the Abhasians and the Tcherkesses.

We returned more dejected than ever from our

[1] An Imeritian king ceded his realm to Russia in 1804; subsequently one of his family rebelled; the revolt was suppressed and the country finally occupied in 1810.

ramble along the melancholy banks of the Phasis. Some little comfort, however, was at hand. All the great moralists are agreed in holding that the highest pleasure is to be found in doing good to others. Well, a thrill of this pleasure was ours when, on going to the house of the British vice-consul, we found there a young Englishman, left alone to represent a commercial house and protect British interests, to whom the sight of two fellow-countrymen was evidently as great a joy as his exhausted frame could support. He had had the fever so often as to have lost count of the times, and was reduced by the general dismalness and monotony of Poti to that state of reckless indifference which the articles of the Church of England call wretchlessness. Nothing to do, for trade was languid, nowhere to go to, not a soul to speak to, except a Russian police officer. If our detention in Poti had the effect of brightening one day in this melancholy life, then, we felt, we had come to Poti not wholly in vain. He was a pleasant, hospitable fellow, and we spent the rest of the afternoon with him, listening to his accounts of the Mingrelians and Russians, and the difficulty of doing business in a country where you could not trust any one's word, nor get a stroke of work done when your back was turned. On his floor we found a whole sheaf of lately arrived English newspapers, among them the reports of the September indignation meetings, which were then at their height, and of which, of course, we had not heard a word before. The last *Times* contained Mr. Gladstone's speech to a mass meeting at Greenwich; what a vivid

impression of the life and movement of the West it gave after the unspeakable stagnancy of these countries.

Business is never very brisk at Poti, our young friend told us, because the Russian tariff strangles import trade, while as for exports—they are chiefly ornamental woods, some dye stuffs, and a little silk and grain—the uncertainty whether a contract to deliver goods will be fulfilled at the time fixed, or rather the certainty that it will not, constitutes a serious difficulty. It is also always uncertain how long your goods may have to lie before they can be shipped; for no vessel drawing more than four feet of water can cross the bar, and the anchorage is very bad outside. There is no port, though some futile attempts have been made to erect a pier and breakwater on the north, or opposite, side of the river; there is only the stream itself with this fatal bar. Everybody now agrees that the Russian government ought not to have made Poti the terminus of the Black Sea railway, but rather Sukhum Kaleh, at the foot of the Caucasus, eighty miles off, where there is a fair roadstead. Everybody throws the blame of the mistake on somebody else, and accusations of corruption are freely bandied about. All the evil comes from an unlucky mistake that was made after the treaty of Adrianople was drawn up in 1829. Russia insisted on, and Turkey yielded, the cession of her territory as far as the river Tchorok (the ancient Acampsis), which falls into the sea a little to the west of Batum. But when the treaty had been drawn up and signed, and the ratifications exchanged, it was discovered that the

name actually written in it was not Tchorok, but Tcholok; the Tcholok being a small river on this, the north-east, side of Batum. Thus Batum was left to Turkey, and Russia lost the much desired and indeed indispensable outlet for the trade of her Transcaucasian provinces. Had such an error happened in a contract between two private persons in England, the Court of Chancery would, upon sufficient proof of the intention of the parties, have ordered the deed to be reformed. But happening between nations, there was no remedy; and Russia had to make the best of the seabord that was left to her. In the interests of the world as much as her own, it is to be hoped she may now acquire Batum. The Turks, of course, make no use of it, and she may.

However, Russia's loss was Poti's gain. The place rose from being a mere cluster of huts under the Turkish fort to a town of five or six thousand people, mostly Mingrelians, but with an admixture of Armenians, Turks (i.e. natives of the Ottoman empire), Gurians from the neighbouring mountains, and Russians. I doubt if it will grow much more, for nothing will ever be made of the attempted port, since the waves carry away the breakwater as fast as it is built, and the Mingrelians of the plain are incurably sluggish. Gifted by nature with splendid frames and a wonderfully rich country, they live in a state of wretchedness and ignorance that passes that of any of their Christian or Mohammedan neighbours, except, perhaps, the Abhasians. It seemed odd to have come "*Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeëtaeos*," and to find

nothing but poverty where the oldest traditions place a treasure-house of riches—the Colchis of King Aeëtes and the Golden Fleece, the spot where lay the isle of Aeëtes' sister, the luxurious enchantress Circe.[1] But these countries have been singularly unfortunate in their history. They have been battled for by hostile empires, none of which was strong enough to retain them; and they have, ever since the fall of the Genoese Black Sea trade, lain out of the track of commerce and civilization. Mingrelia here belonged partly to the all-benumbing Turks, partly to a dynasty of local princes called Dadian, owning allegiance first to Turkey, then to Russia, who kept the peasantry in the most abject serfage. With their emancipation by the present Czar in 1866 a better day has dawned on them; though the only use they seem so far to have made of their liberty has been to break out in agrarian riots, which had been quelled just before our visit.[2]

Next morning brought a sudden change in the weather. The sky was perfectly clear, the strong sun was raising a cloud of steam from the wet soil through the still chilly air, and on rushing up to the river bank to see whether there were signs of movement on the steamer, we were astonished to discover both to north

[1] Mr. Gladstone has shewn in the chapters on Homeric geography of his 'Homer and the Homeric Age' that the Aeaean isle is probably conceived of by the poet as lying in the extreme east rather than in the west.

[2] The imagination of Constantinople had turned these riots into a general insurrection of the Caucasian tribes, which was duly telegraphed to Vienna, and figured in the English papers toward the beginning of August 1876.

and south long lines of snowy mountains. There had been a heavy snow-fall in the storm of the last two days, and not only the whole chain of the Caucasus to the north down to a height of 7000 feet, but the mountains of Guria and Lazistan, on the borders of Turkey, were covered with a thick white mantle. Already on the bank at which the steamer lay—there was no wharf, only the clay bank—a crowd of intending passengers had encamped, who turned out to be Turkman and Persian pilgrims to Mecca, who were journeying thither by way of Constantinople and the Red Sea. Having nowhere else to stay, they had squatted down here beside the little vessel, so that there might be no risk of her escaping them. Pictures of patience they looked, each with his carpet bundle beside him, immovable as Egyptian gods, and with no more expression on their faces.

There was, unhappily, much more risk that the steamer would not escape at all. Though the wind had fallen, the sea was still high on the bar. We questioned the captain, but he looked at the great breakers coming in with a steady roll—you can just see them from the town over the bushes that line the river—and shook his head more solemnly every time he looked. We packed up, breakfasted, and had everything conveyed on board, with a sort of vague notion that we should thereby add to the chances of a start. At first they promised to try at ten o'clock; then, when ten o'clock came, at noon. Noon came, the hour of departure was postponed till one; one arrived, and though everybody was now on board,

the captain hesitated still. As it was admitted that the large steamer for Constantinople, which was waiting for us at Batum, would wait no longer than eight o'clock that night, things looked serious, and we began again to enquire about the trains back to Tiflis. Perhaps the tender would have never got away, had there not been another tender in the same plight, that one, namely, which had to carry the passengers for Odessa to Sukhum Kaleh, where the Odessa steamer lay awaiting them. Her more daring skipper got up his steam, and soon after one o'clock dropped down the river to try the bar. Then we took heart of grace and followed, our decks crowded fore and aft with the pilgrim throng. The Odessa boat plunged in among the breakers, and in ten minutes was safe through, rising and falling on the long rollers of the smooth open sea as she turned her prow to the north, and steamed away to the Caucasian coast. With this encouragement, we paused, collected our strength, and made a rush at the bar. The water certainly was very shallow, so shallow that one could make out the sandbanks under the fretting foam that broke over them, but by good luck we hit the right channel, and almost before we had ceased to hold our breath, the foam was behind us, and the bright blue sea all round. Of Poti, whose houses are not as high as the low trees that fringe the shore and the stream, we no longer saw anything except the lighthouse, and heartily hoped we should never see it again. The conduct of Medea might have been more leniently judged if her critics had known what sort of a place it

was she escaped from. A less attractive hero than Jason would have done to tempt a lady away from such a den. But the countless bards who have sung of the Argonauts do not seem to have been strong in local knowledge. From Apollonius Rhodius to Mr. William Morris, nobody says anything about the bar at the Phasis mouth, though it must have given a vessel so large as the Argo some trouble to cross it at short notice, when Medea came on board by moonlight. To be sure, she was a sorceress, and may have known how to lay the breakers or deepen the channel.

Soon after the war between Russia and Turkey broke out, a telegram reached this country which caused the liveliest joy to all who have ever been at Poti, a telegram stating that the town had been completely destroyed by the Turkish ironclads. Like other telegrams from Turkish sources, however, this one turned out to be in excess of the truth. Two ironclads had appeared off Poti, and no doubt might easily have destroyed it, had they come near enough. But the water was, or they thought it was, too shallow to let them do so, and it is doubtful if any of their shot reached the town. However, the inhabitants fled in a panic, so Poti now remains in the possession of its frogs only, who may very likely have ensconced themselves in the deserted houses. Long may they retain it.

From the deck of the steamer this wonderfully bright evening we enjoyed what was the finest panorama of mountains that either of us had ever seen. All

CALIFORNIA.

along the north and north-west horizon, the Caucasus was visible through an arc of 250 miles from the neighbourhood of Suram, till it sank beneath the sea far beyond Sukhum and Pitzunda, a line of innumerable snowy peaks that stood glittering against the clear sky, each perfectly distinct at this vast distance. In the extreme east there was a gap, where the ridge of Suram lies, for it is not high enough to be visible one hundred miles off; and thence, from east-south-east to south-west, the eye travelled along the bold and rugged ranges that lie south of Imeritia and Mingrelia, lower indeed than their northern rivals, but deeply snowed in parts, and reaching 9000 or 10,000 feet above the sea. Highest and boldest among these rose the serrated group of Lazistan, between Batum and Trebizond, descending with splendid steepness into the deep waters. In front of this majestic amphitheatre of mountains lay a stretch of low and wooded land, with a white sandy beach surrounding the eastern-most bay of the Euxine, whose coast can be traced trending off on either hand, to north-west and south-west, in a magnificent sweep. Just behind Poti the marshy plain stretched far inland; but farther south, near the boundary line of the two empires, the hills come down to the shore, and we saw that very piece of rocky woody ground where the strongly posted Turks have lately repulsed several Russian attempts to advance upon Batum. Imagine this vast landscape bathed in that marvellously clear, still, luminous air which in these countries succeeds a storm, the glassy waters round the vessel heaving softly as

they reflected the delicious hues of evening, the line of snows that encircles two-thirds of the horizon gleaming with rose and violet against the last rays of the level sun; historic cities set like gems round the ample bay from Trebizond in the south-west to the famous Greek shrine of Pitzunda on the north, and you have a picture to which the whole Euxine and Mediterranean can scarcely supply an equal. It is the end of the great line of inland seas that stretches from here to the Straits of Gibraltar, a noble limit to the farthest voyages of the ancient world.

CHAPTER X.

FROM POTI TO CONSTANTINOPLE BY THE BLACK SEA.

IT is little more than thirty-five miles from Poti to Batum; but our vessel was so slow and heavily laden that it was nearly dark when we entered the bay of Batum, and slipped under the side of the larger steamer, formerly a man-of-war, but now belonging to the Russian Steam Navigation Company, which was to carry us to Constantinople. There is no proper harbour; only a semicircular bay formed by a promontory which runs out sufficiently to protect the anchorage ground from westerly winds. Towards the north and north-east there is, therefore, no shelter, and when a gale rises from that quarter, ships have to run out to sea. Nevertheless, Batum is the best port along the whole south-eastern coast of the Euxine, and has been a place of some note from the earliest times. The Greeks called it *βάθυς λίμην* (the deep haven), whence the modern name. At present, however, it has but little trade: the town is small, and I saw but few vessels lying off it. There is no cart-road either inland or along the shore into Mingrelia, so that neither exports nor imports need be expected. In the hands of the Turks it is useless, while, if the Russians acquire it, they will make it the terminus of the

railway to Tiflis, and the outlet for all the Transcaucasian trade. Its transfer to them would, therefore, be really a gain to the world at large as well as to the conquerors, and whatever results the present war may have, it is difficult, especially when one has just come from Poti, not to hope that such a transfer may be one of them. The ground rises steeply behind towards the mountains, which cannot be less than 8000 feet in height, thickly wooded below, rugged and rocky above; in fact, a most difficult piece of country for an army to operate upon.[1] These hills run all along the coast, rising farther west to a height of nearly 10,000 feet, and the Tchorok, a strong and rapid stream, seems to come down through them in a deep valley. I suppose it must be in the delta at its mouth, to the west of the promontory whereon the town stands, that the fevers which infest Batum are bred. All this coast suffers from these intermittent fevers or agues, wherever there is a bit of swampy land, and sometimes even where none such can be discerned. But no place is half so unhealthy as Poti.

We passed during the night the magnificent cape where the highlands of Lazistan run down into the sea, and at sunrise Trebizond lay glittering before us, its white houses rising from the bay among cypress groves and orchards. The steamer anchored to take in cargo at eight o'clock, more than a mile from the shore, and we had plenty of time to see this famous

[1] The town, so far as I could make out, was not then fortified, though there was an old castle standing just above the beach. However, the water is so deep that those who control the sea could make the place untenable for an enemy by the fire of their ironclads.

city, which has been a famous city ever since the days when adventurous Milesians first made their way from Ionia, coasting along in open galleys, into these strange seas where races dwelt whose very names have been forgotten.

It stands on a steepish hill, washed on two sides, the north and the east, by the sea. Eastward lies the bay, which is not a safe harbour, being open to the north and north-east, but affords deep water and a good bottom for anchoring. At the northern horn of the bay is the castle, whose ancient walls are built on a bold projecting cliff. Here, probably, stood the first Greek settlement, which needed a strong position to hold its own against the fierce natives. The mediæval fortress whither the Byzantine emperors sometimes fled from their capital, and where, indeed, a Christian empire lasted on for eight years after Constantinople fell before the Ottomans, is a little way back from the sea, and occupies a flat-topped, rocky hill between two deep ravines. The mouldering walls and towers still stand along the edges of the cliff, festooned with climbing plants, but the buildings within are gone. Except these walls, three small Byzantine churches, two of them turned into mosques, and a few bits of marble covered with old Greek ornament, built here and there into more recent edifices, there are scarce any traces of antiquity to meet the eye.[1] The better houses stand scattered in

[1] Mr. Biliotti, the British consul, and a skilful archæologist, informed me that hardly any relics of Greek art have been found in or near Trebizond. It is always so, he says, in places which have been the seats of Byzantine power.

their own enclosures or gardens; they are sometimes two or three stories high, brightly painted, the roofs red-tiled, and the windows often covered with wooden lattices. As in most Eastern towns, you frequently come upon a space either vacant or strewed with the remains of deserted houses, and fancy you have got to an abandoned suburb, when a little farther the habitations begin again. The bazaar is not a series of covered arcades, as in Constantinople or Cairo, but a maze of steep, narrow, winding lanes, where a donkey could scarcely pass, between open booths in which men sell or work. Except for fruit and for bread, which is commonly made in twisted rolls or large thin pancakes, there seemed to be no buyers. Most of the dealers were Armenians, a few Greeks, hardly any Turks, though fully half the population of the town, and more than half, they say, of the adjoining district, is Mohammedan.

There had been some alarms of massacre just before our visit, the fanaticism of the Muslims having suddenly risen at the entry of a body of volunteers, proceeding from Lazistan (where the people are said to be wholly Muslim and exceptionally fierce) to fight against Servia and Montenegro. As these wild fellows paraded the streets, the Christians fled to their houses, while a considerable number of Mohammedans were inspired to join the ranks. Nothing happened at the moment, but the Greeks and Armenians continued to think that a volcano was ready to burst out beneath them, and told us with terror that the governor had not regular troops or police enough

to resist an outbreak, in which Muslim volunteers and irregulars would no doubt be the foremost. Meantime all seemed quiet. The presence of the European consuls does something to reassure the Christians; but there are hardly any other Franks in the place, only one or two agents of the steamboat companies (the Austrian Lloyd's and French Messageries), whose vessels call. The trade, most of which is in Armenian hands, is mainly with Persia through Erzerum (to which two roads lead) and Bayazid. A certain quantity of British goods, especially cotton stuffs and hardware, is imported, and finds its way through the adjoining parts of Asia Minor, but the exports (except from Persia) are trifling. There is little local industry, and whatever is made is very rough and poor in workmanship. We looked in vain through the bazaar for any pretty things to carry away; even the modern silver work is coarse, much inferior to that of Georgia. Turkish is the language commonly spoken, even by the Greeks, although an old Greek dialect holds its ground, a dialect which is said to differ widely from the modern Greek of Constantinople, and to have preserved the ancient pronunciation in some sounds. For instance, the first syllable of *αὐτος* is pronounced as a sort of diphthong, not *avtos*, as in modern Greek. The climate, whose heat is moderated by constant sea-breezes, would be delightful were it not for the wet mists which, during the whole year, except two months of autumn, come up from the sea and produce rheumatic attacks from which newcomers suffer severely. Snow never lies; but in

winter there are terrible storms from the north-east, with showers of sleet and snow, and a short, high sea that makes navigation dangerous on these exposed and harbourless shores.

Trebizond dwells in my memory as a sort of enchanted city. Perhaps a place seems more out of the common range of things if, instead of entering it along dusty roads, you come and depart gliding slowly over dark blue waters. Its situation is wonderfully beautiful, with the serrated range of Lazistan on the one side, a group of snowy peaks plunging into a deep sea, and on the other the bold, bluff cape on whose top tradition places the encampment of the Ten Thousand Greeks. Then how picturesque is the interior: the grand old walls of the fortress rising out of glens of green; solemn cypress groves standing all round and sheltering the tombs of the dead; glimpses down the dark and narrow streets, or through arches of trellised vine, of an intensely blue sea basking in the sunlight. Such a strange, silent sea it seems, without a sail to spot its surface: as the city too is silent, for though there are some few people moving about the streets that lead up from the landing-place, and sitting in the bazaar, there is nowhere any bustle, but rather a dreamful sense of hush and languor which agrees well with that air of departed greatness that seems to brood over the place.

Embarking in the afternoon, and indeed barely catching our steamer, which started earlier than had been expected, we got from the deck a good idea of the structure of the coast. Immediately behind

the town there rises a bold hill of igneous rock, the flat tabular top of which may have been the origin of its name (Trapezus, from τράπεζα) ; and beyond it are mountains from 2000 to 3000 feet high. Still farther back, some eight or ten miles inland, a second range, parallel to the coast, and thickly wooded, attains a height of 6000 feet. Over its passes, paths lead to the lofty table-lands which form the centre of Asia Minor, and which are mostly bare and dry, rich in soil and minerals, but very sparsely peopled. All along to the west for 400 miles the coast has much the same character. It is everywhere bold, with scarcely a scrap of flat land except at the deltas of the two great rivers, descending to the water occasionally in cliffs, but more frequently in steep slopes, which are often clothed with park-like wood. Behind the hills that front the sea there is usually a gentler acclivity ; then a second range of woody mountains, and through the gaps in these, peeps of much loftier summits far inland, some spotted with snow, and little short of 10,000 feet in height. The steamer generally keeps two or three miles from the shore ; but in this clear air and sunny weather, it is easy, even at that distance, to enjoy the exquisite and perpetually varying beauty of its rocky headlands round which the white wave surges, and sweet little bays into which streamlets descend through thickets of oak and hazel. The greenness of everything was most refreshing to eyes wearied with the bare dryness of Georgian and Armenian landscapes. It is a strangely solitary country. Now and again you see houses dotted about

in twos and threes, but villages are rare, and of towns there are but three or four all the way from Batum to the Bosphorus.

Next night, the second of the voyage, brought us to Kerasun, the Cerasus of the Greeks, whence cherries are said to take their name, as pheasants do from the Phasis. There we lay several hours, taking in a cargo of nuts, and by the bright moonlight saw a picturesque little town lying along the west side of a high rocky promontory. At daybreak we called again at Ordu, a smaller and even more picturesque seaport, where white houses with red-tiled roofs lie scattered among their corn-fields, vines, and orchards all up the slope of a high woody hill. The cargo we took in, consisting of beans, was brought out a mile or so in open boats, and as there were but few of these for the work, they had to go and return several times. With them other boats came, bringing grapes, plums, peaches, pears, and melons, all of which found a ready market on board. Wild, simple-looking fellows the boatmen were, wearing a fez with a gay-coloured handkerchief tied round it, a short open jacket of scarlet or blue, short trousers, and a purple sash bound round the waist. Turks and Greeks seem to dress much alike, nor could we distinguish them by their faces. By the help of one of these boats it was possible to get a swim in the waters of the Euxine, which were deliciously warm, yet fresh, and perceptibly less salt than those of the ocean.

Our third night was spent in lying at anchor off Samsun, which is the most considerable port in this

whole stretch of shore, though it has nothing better than an open and rather shallow bay. It is unhealthy, perhaps because it lies between two great deltas, thrusting long tongues of flat, marshy, bush-covered land into the sea, those of the Iris and Halys (Yeshil Ermak and Kizil Ermak), that Halys which Croesus crossed under the encouragement of the Delphic god, who told him that, if he did so, he would destroy a great empire, but omitted to add that the empire was his own. Samsun is the emporium of the tobacco trade of these parts, and the terminus of the road which runs up to Sivas, the capital of a large province. It is a rambling, tumble-down sort of place, much less handsome and elegant-looking than Trebizond. I went on shore with a Hungarian gentleman, who had joined the steamer at Kerasun. A long, irregular street, sometimes wide and sometimes narrow, runs along the shore, but we could find no proper bazaar, indeed no sight whatever except the remains of a fine old Genoese castle with mouldering yellow walls, dating from the fourteenth century. At that time the enterprising countrymen of Columbus had the whole trade of the Euxine in their hands, and owned many a factory and fortress along these shores as far as the Crimea. There was something of an Italian look about the courtyard, with its gallery of slightly pointed arches, supported on columns, running all round; and in the street a pretty little marble fountain seemed to tell us that some hand more delicate than a Turk's had set it up. Tobacco fields and olive yards bordered the road to Sivas, which mounts

the hill behind; in the distance we saw the bold mountains, between which the Halys descends in a swift, unnavigable stream from the table-lands within.

The night following was the fourth of this slow voyage, in which we lay-to during nearly as much time as we steamed ahead. The bright moonlight enabled me to make out, as we passed it, the lofty square promontory, crowned by a lighthouse—rare sight in the dominions of the Sultan—under the shadow of which Sinope lies, immortal as the birth-place of Diogenes, and as the cause, by the bombardment it suffered, of the Crimean War. Its harbour is the best, indeed the only one in all this part of the coast; but we did not call, having no cargo to take in.[1] Apparently it has now but little trade. The last two nights we had been lying at anchor; so I had found it possible to sleep in the tiny cabin. But to-night, when the vessel was in motion, the screw proved too much for me, its shaft bumping and quivering immediately under my pillow in the extreme stem; so stretching out on the deck a Kurdish rug and the skin of an Armenian bear, I slept there *à la belle étoile*, and enjoyed the novelty of the situation. But for the wretchedness of the cabin accommodation, the voyage was delightful; we felt quite sorry to think that only another day and night lay between us and Constantinople. It was not only that such a succession of exquisite land- and sea-scapes unrolled themselves

[1] Dr. Radde has noted the interesting fact that the flora of the eastern half of this coast of Asia Minor is of the Central European type, while that of the western half, from the neighbourhood of Sinope W., belongs rather to the Mediterranean type.

before our eyes as we glided slowly along, that every morning brought a stoppage off some picturesque village, a swarm of boats full of wild, bright-eyed fellows round the ship, a plunge in the delicious brine. The vessel itself was a little moving world, full of variety and interest. To the passengers received from Poti, there had now been added half as many more, picked up at the different ports on the way; and taken together, they made a kind of Eastern menagerie we were never tired of examining. Towards the bow of the steamer, in front of the captain's cabin, which forms a small house on the deck, was a nest of Persians on their way from Teheran and Tavriz to Constantinople, some to buy goods there, others to proceed thence to Mecca. One of the latter was sick, and tenderly nursed by his companions. They wear long green or red-brown robes, baggy linen trousers, and tall, conical hats of black Bokhara lambswool, with a linen or cotton coloured skull-cap underneath, and colour their beards, and sometimes their eyebrows, as well as their toe and finger nails, with some yellowish-brown dye, let us say henna. Here they sat all day long upon their carpets, frequently making tea over a small charcoal brazier, and drinking it very weak, out of tiny glasses like those with which children furnish a doll's house. Sometimes they slipped noiselessly along to the cabin—two or three of the richer sort had berths in that vile little den, and, though perfectly still and unobtrusive, were not very agreeable inmates when they took to shaking out their bundles. Sometimes they read out of dimi-

nutive books, but generally they sat cross-legged, talking eagerly to one another, and never taking any notice of the other passengers, much less of the scenery. There is something interesting in their finely cut faces, a look, if not of refinement, at least of ancient culture. Just abaft of them, between the captain's deck-house and the funnel, were planted their hereditary enemies, the Turkmans, of whom we were carrying quite a horde, all pilgrims to Mecca, from the south-east shores of the Caspian, perhaps from Khiva or Bokhara. Formidable-looking fellows they are, tall and robust, with short, blunt noses, and small, fierce eyes, a complexion brown rather than dark, and a look which, though stolid and grave, has in it a latent ferocity like that of a caged panther. It is better, one reflects, to meet them here than in their native steppes, where they make a slave of every one whom they do not murder. They sat or lay through the livelong day silent in the same spot, overshadowed by their brown sheepskin caps, seldom, except at supper, addressing one another, and hardly moving, save to perform their devotions, which they do most regularly, standing in two rows, and prostrating themselves on the deck towards Mecca at the proper intervals. (The Persians seemed much less devout.) At sunset they wrapped themselves in their large sheepskin coats, having worn during the day, if it was fine, only a linen undercloak, and dirty linen or cotton trousers, and lay down all together in a tangled heap, one man's head over his neighbour's legs. Their arms had been taken from them, to be restored at the end of the voyage;

only a knife was left to each to cut his bread withal. It was Ramazan, the month when Mohammedans fast from sunrise to sunset; so they took but one meal, which generally consisted of a sort of gruel. They had no flesh to eat, but some of them refreshed themselves with tea. These pilgrims are conveyed all the way from Poti to Mecca for about £2 5*s*. each; and their number is increasing every year. Indeed here in the East, as well as in France, the facilities which steam gives for travelling have made the habit of pilgrimage much more general, and pilgrimage has a sensible effect in strengthening religious animosities. He who returns from Mecca is something of a hero and a saint at home, his saintship showing itself chiefly in a fiercer hatred of the infidel. The perceptible increase during the last twenty years of Mohammedan fanaticism is due in no small measure to the stimulus which Mecca, with its sacred sights and furious crowds, supplies. When these Turkmans should have reached Stamboul, they were to be transferred to another steamer of the same Russian company plying to the East Indies, and be carried by it through the Suez Canal and down the Red Sea. A long way round, to be sure, from the southern extremity of the Caspian; but over and above the superior ease of a sea journey, they could thus avoid passing through the territory of their Persian foes. For the Turkmans are devout and orthodox Sunni Muslims, and abominate the schismatic Shiahs on the other side of the captain's cabin.

Still further towards the stern the stray Greeks and

Armenians whom we have gathered up on our way have planted themselves, together with some so-called Ottoman Turks, bearing no resemblance to the Turkmans. Except a few turbaned Ottomans, all, both Christians and Turks, wear the red fez, and the poorer ones their brilliant crimson sash, with more or less of picturesque variety in jackets. The richer Turks, who come to dinner in the cabin, are in European coats and trousers, according to the French style, which now prevails everywhere in these countries. These cabin Mohammedans seem to care very little about the Ramazan fast, and one of them partakes freely of the excellent Crimean wine which the steward provides; and otherwise, too, gives no sign of remembering the existence of the Prophet of Mecca. I fancy there is a good deal of laxity among the better class of Turks, just as there is among Russians of the same class about observing the fasts which the Orthodox Church so strenously inculcates. Several of these Turks have their wives and children with them, who are made to encamp in a corner of the deck at the stern, where a little movable railing is set up to divide them from the other passengers. Here, with a maid or two, they sit and lie, some with their faces only veiled, some enveloped in an ample blue-checked cloak, which covers head and body too, not stirring from the spot through the whole voyage. They seem to be unvisited and unregarded by their husbands, and get their meals in a wretched sort of way off platters brought to them from the cook-shop. The children are pretty: one sweet little creature,

with yellow hair and eyes of dark hazel, runs about the deck: the rest lie dozing among their mothers and nurses.

Nothing strikes a Western with more disgust than the way he sees women treated in Mohammedan countries. It is not so much the enforced seclusion that revolts you as the tacit assumption that women are inferior creatures altogether, unfit to be companions for men, but rather to be reckoned a link between him and the brutes, and treated with little more regard than the latter. That they acquiesce uncomplainingly in this view, and assert their power in hidden and crooked ways, does not make the sight less offensive, or the result less mischievous. Although the Christians sometimes adopt the policy of seclusion, and defend it as the only safeguard they have against the lust of tyrannical officials, they treat their womankind in quite another spirit, and feel the contrast in the position of woman to be the most fundamental difference that separates them from the Muslims. Probably it is this which, more than anything else, makes them progressive, while the others remain stagnant. These Muslim women are almost mindless : what then can they do for their children ?

Besides the three main groups of Asiatics (Persians, Turkmans, and Turkish subjects) which I have mentianed, and one or two stray Georgians and Russians, there was a little knot of Franks, mostly gathered at the stern, consisting of an Italian from Trieste (acting somewhere as vice-consul of Russia), a Hungarian

engineer, who had fought in the Polish insurrection of 1862, a Frenchman, a German, and ourselves. We were the only travellers for pleasure, and, being very curious about the country and its inhabitants, were made the receptacles of a great many interesting facts, which we tested as well as we could by cross-examination. French was of course the medium of conversation, as it has now, superseding Italian, become in many parts of Turkey; but German, Italian, and English were also heard. Reckoning in all the tongues, there were at least eight constantly and regularly spoken on board; Russian being the language of the ship herself, though several of the officers knew some English. This beats for variety even the South American steamer from Bordeaux, where French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese may all be heard every minute on the deck. The mixture of races and tongues is the phenomenon that at first strikes one with most surprise in the East; but, after a little, one comes to consider it as natural, and the dominance of three or four great languages in Europe, and of one language in each several country, as being rather the exception. With a curiosity which was certainly not Oriental, and perhaps scarcely polite, we spent hours in rambling through this little world of nationalities (one group excepted, from which everybody was of course bound to keep his eyes averted), and reflected what an admirable mirror it was of the larger world which is formed by these borderlands of Asia and Europe.

On the fifth day of the voyage we made our last call, off a charming little village called Ineboli, nestling at the foot of a steep and wooded hill, where coal, they say, has been found. Unhappily, the shore is exposed, with no harbour near. From this point the line of coast trends inwards, forming the great shallow bay of Bithynia, in the middle of which is Eregli, where there are extensive coal beds, as yet little worked, but worked sufficiently to supply the Turkish navy. Holding on a straight course for the Bosphorus, we saw the land recede farther and farther, till at sunset the beauties of bay and glen and promontory were lost in the haze of distance, and nothing remained but a line of grey serrated mountains, bearing dark patches of forest on their middle slopes.

I despair of conveying the impression of melancholy which this coast of Asia Minor makes upon the traveller, whatever be his political or religious prepossessions. Here is a country blessed with every gift of nature, a fertile soil, possessing every variety of exposure and situation, a mild and equable climate, mines of iron, copper, silver, and coal in the mountains, a land of exquisite beauty, which was once studded with flourishing cities and filled by an industrious population. And now from the Euphrates to the Bosphorus all is silence, poverty, despair. There is hardly a sail on the sea, hardly a village on the shores, hardly a road by which commerce can pass into the interior. You ask the cause, and receive from every one the same answer. Misgovernment, or rather no

government; the existence of a power which does nothing for its subjects, but stands in the way when there is a chance of their doing something for themselves. The mines, for instance, cannot be worked without a concession from Constantinople; and to get this concession, you have to spend months in intriguing and bribing only to find, when you are just beginning to work the vein, that the local governor, who can stop everything, is changed, or that some other official turns up who must also be bribed, so that the whole process has to begin *de novo*. Our friend the Hungarian engineer, who was on his way back from Kara Hissar, a town far up among the mountains behind Kerasun, where he had been "prospecting" for minerals, and who, like his countrymen generally, sympathized strongly with Turkey against Russia, assured us that there was no question as to the existence of valuable mines all along these ranges, some of which had been worked by the ancients, but that the difficulties of getting any contract you could rely on were such that every project had been or was being abandoned. Of course, there is no capital in the country, all must come from Constantinople or Western Europe. The account he gave of the condition of the people near Kara Hissar was truly pitiable. The exactions of those who farm the taxes, and go about with armed men squeezing pretty nearly what they please out of the helpless peasants, discourage every effort to improve agriculture, and make it scarcely worth while to carry on agriculture at all. Lands are everywhere

falling out of cultivation. Villages are being deserted.[1] Round Trebizond, as we were told there, even the better families are selling their old jewels, and sinking into beggary. There are no manufactures, except of just so much coarse pottery and woollen stuffs as each village needs. Owing to the want of roads, it does not pay to bring corn from the interior for shipment save when prices rise very high; and if the crops fail in any district, a famine follows, because food cannot be carried to it from other places. Nothing is raised or shipped from the few seaports except such raw products as nuts,[2] beans, wool, and wax, with sometimes a little grain. Of course, nobody has any motive to save money, for it would be taken from him as soon as he was known to have it. If he does save, his only security is to continue to go ragged. The police are few and unorganized (a trustworthy informant told me that in the large province of Trebizond there are only fifty policemen to 800,000 people); and, indeed, there is so little security for life and property that the wonder is that robberies and massacres are not more common. A sort of traditional awe still surrounds the government in the eyes of all but the Kurds, who are practically independent, and wander about as far

[1] Even in the larger towns the population seems to be diminishing. Trebizond was estimated towards the close of last century to contain 80,000, and Sinope 50,000 inhabitants: now the former city has but 30,000, and the latter, I believe, about 6000.

[2] The nuts are mostly exported to Taganrog, on the Sea of Azof. They go from Kerasun in the country boats in spring, when navigation becomes safe after the winter storms.

west as Sivas, plundering and murdering to their heart's content.

All this oppression and misery falls upon the Mohammedan population equally with the Christian. In fact, along the coast the Christians are so far better off that they have the English, Russian, and French consuls to appeal to, whereas the Mussulmans have nobody. But in the interior, where there are no consuls, the Christians are doubtless worse off, since, being unarmed, and without any means of legal redress (for their testimony may be, and usually is, rejected in the courts of justice), they are practically at the mercy of a neighbour who covets their vineyard, or an official who carries off their daughters. What cruelties and oppression go on in these almost unexplored regions, which few travellers have crossed, nobody knows ; even the consuls of the coast towns tell you that they can only guess, for though all sorts of stories come down, the details can never be relied on, certain as it may be that some outrage has been perpetrated. As to the likelihood of a general massacre of Christians, opinions vary. It would be easy enough, for the government have no troops to check a Mussulman rising, while the Christians are timid and unarmed. On the other hand, the richer Mohammedans would do their utmost to prevent it, for it would become the signal for general pillage and confusion, in which they too would suffer. There seems to be no doubt that the feeling of Mohammedan hatred towards Christians is now sensibly more bitter than it was at the time of the Crimean War. Many causes

have been assigned for this. I believe one of them to be a dim feeling that the Ottoman power is dying, and a sense of helpless rage at perceiving that the Christian population, whose numbers do not diminish so fast as those of the Muslims, are secretly looking forward to their emancipation.

On the morning of our sixth day from Poti, the bluff hill appeared which marks the entrance to the Bosphorus, and beyond it the rocky coast of Thrace, trending away west-north-west towards the Balkans. Asia Minor is flatter here than round Sinope or Ineboli, but some miles back a long line of low limestone mountains, covered with wood, seems to run parallel to the shore. Nearing the Bosphorus, we discover the two Symplegades, or Wandering Isles, which no longer inspire the least fear that they will dash together and crush the passing vessel, for they lie fully three miles apart, each being a mass of bare black rocks, close, the one to the Asiatic, the other to the European shore, and quite outside the mouth of the straits. There was a great stir and bustle on board when it was known we were within two hours of Stamboul. The Persians made up their bundles, tying braziers and tea-cups inside their carpets; the Turkmans strutted about in the glory of their recovered arms; even the Turkish husband condescended a word or two of directions to his wife in her sheep-pen at the poop. Stamboul, as the stronghold of Islam, and the burial-place of divers Muslim saints and conquerors, is almost as sacred in Mohammedan eyes as it is, for another set of reasons, in those of

Eastern Christians, and, for a third set, in those of the curious traveller. After all that has been written and printed about it since the days of Herodotus,[1] it would be absurd for me to attempt a regular description either of the city or of the magnificent avenue which leads to it. I shall only remark on a few salient points which a reader may be willing to have recalled to his mind.

The northern or upper end of the Bosphorus is bare and stern. Sharp black rocks rise on either side, backed, on the Asiatic, by steep hills, nearly 1000 feet high, and covered with thick low woods, while the European shore is bare and brown. The sea frets in foam upon these cliffs, for however calm it may be elsewhere, a breeze or swell is rarely wanting here. Sailing down the current, which runs pretty swiftly out of the Black Sea—it is so strong at one point that boats have to be tugged up along the shore by ropes[2]—the breadth gradually diminishes from two miles to about one mile, when we heave-to under the guns of a small recently strengthened battery, and send ashore an officer with our papers. Lower down we halt again off the town of Buyukdere, on the European side, and are

[1] Herodotus tells us of a Persian satrap named Megabazus, who was taken to the Bosphorus, and shewn Chalcedon on the one side and Byzantium on the other. When they told him that Chalcedon was the older town, he remarked simply, "These Chalcedonians must have been blind."

[2] It is now ascertained that this current, due to the overflow from the Black Sea of its lighter, less saline water, is partly compensated for by an under-current running the other way from the Aegean to the Black Sea, and which apparently consists of the heavier, more saline water. The existence of such an under-current was conjectured as long ago as the time of Procopius, but has only recently been proved.

met by a boat from a Russian frigate lying here off the summer villa of the Russian Embassy, to which we deliver despatches from Tiflis. General Ignatieff, they tell us, is away in Russia; so every one knows that nothing decisive can happen just yet. A little farther we pass, still on the European side, the village of Therapia, where stands that terrestrial paradise in which Sir Henry Elliot is watching over British interests. A lofty pile of buildings, with a cool marble gallery running from end to end, rises from the edge of the deep, brilliantly clear green water; behind, a garden, full of choice shrubs and shadowy walks, covers the hill slope, while in front one looks right up the winding strait into the Euxine, whose broad expanse can just be seen, crisped with white waves. Then we double the promontory where the mighty fortress stands in which Mohammed II. entrenched himself before the last siege of Constantinople, lofty walls built in the shape of the name of Allah, with three stupendous towers; then, as the channel narrows, the current flows stronger, and we glide more swiftly between gay villages that grow more frequent, and at last melt into a continuous town. The landscape softens as woods and gardens begin to clothe the steep hills and embower the white-walled villas, steamers thronged with people meet us, and light caïques flit over the glassy floor of this unrivalled street, which is at once a river and a sea, till at last an amphitheatre of hills appears crowned with white houses, tall black cypresses, the huge domes of mosques and a forest of slender minarets, with a crowd of vessels

lying below, and the Sea of Marmora glittering in a wide sheet of silver beyond.

Constantinople is one of those few places in the world which surpasses all expectations. It is more beautiful, more unique, more commanding than any description has prepared you to find it. As everybody knows, it consists of three parts: firstly, Stamboul proper, the city of Constantine, standing on the site of old Byzantium between the Sea of Marmora and the Golden Horn (a long narrow inlet off the Bosphorus); secondly, Galata, a town which grew up in the later middle ages, also in Europe, but on the opposite or north-east side of the Golden Horn, and Pera, an extension of Galata up the steep hill which rises behind it; and finally, on the other or Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, the towns of Scutari and Kadikeui (Chalcedon), with their far-stretching suburbs. This immense mass of houses covering the three shores, and running far up along the margin of the Bosphorus in a continuous street, gives the impression of a vast population, far larger than the 800,000 at which the inhabitants are commonly estimated. I do not suppose that Paris, with its million and a half of people, spreads over a wider area. But then, though the streets of Constantinople are narrow, there are huge empty spaces scattered through it, covered by ruined houses, or gardens, or graveyards, so that great part of the surface is not really occupied by the living at all. However, this sense of a teeming multitude round you adds to the grandeur of the view. Nobody knows the proportions which the various elements of this popu-

lation bear to one another. The Armenians reckon themselves at 200,000, the Greeks are nearly as numerous, the Mohammedans more numerous, probably 350,000; the balance consists of Bulgarians and Franks. Stamboul proper and Scutari are the Muslim quarters *par excellence* (though there are some Christians in Stamboul too), Pera and Galata the Christian. On the top of Pera hill stand the winter palaces of the ambassadors—tremendous piles, among which our own and that of the German envoy are the largest, and have occupied the finest sites. Their conspicuous position towering among the houses of the Franks over against the decaying palaces and offices of the Sublime Porte on the crest of Stamboul aptly typifies the sort of protectorate which the powers of Europe have assumed over the Sultan, and the independent jurisdiction their representatives claim in this strange town. Constantinople indeed is not a city, but several cities, distinct communities dwelling together, but not mingling, since they have neither feelings nor interests to unite them. Or, rather, it is a huge caravanserai, where men of all nations meet for business or pleasure, and abide for days or years without feeling it a home. It has no corporate existence for them, nor can they have any local pride in it. What sort of municipal feeling can be looked for in a town where one-half the inhabitants call the other half dogs, and that other half is constantly expecting to be set upon and massacred?[1]

[1] I was told in the end of September that there had been several panics among the Christians; but, so far as a passing traveller could

It is pleasanter to return for a moment to the external aspect of the place. Constantinople has two glories—the glory of the mountains, and the glory of the sea. In every landscape the background is formed by the bold heights of Scutari and the more distant Mysian Olympus, with its snowy summit cutting the clear air like mother-of-pearl. In the city itself there is scarcely a yard of level ground. Old Stamboul is built on a long ridge rising some two hundred feet above the waters that lave it on either hand, a ridge whose top, indented by hollows and crowned by massive mosques and graceful white minarets, with here and there a pile of ancient ruin, offers a sky-line always changing as the beholder moves, but always beautiful. Then no city has such a sea—a sea deep to its very margin, intensely clear, intensely blue, penetrating everywhere, till you can hardly recognize its arms; a sea that narrows to a river in the Golden Horn and Bosphorus, and spreads into a shoreless expanse in the broad Propontis, studded with shining isles. The central

judge, their fears, however real, were not quite justified by anything the Mohammedans had yet said or done. An atmosphere of terror and wonder grows up in such a place at such a time—indeed it always exists in the East—in which unreasonable fears are entertained. I was warned that it was dangerous to pass alone through Stamboul by day, and wandered into it at night without experiencing any difficulty except from the want of lamps and the abundance of sleeping dogs. I was forced to take the *cavass* of the Sublime Porte (a sort of soldier porter who is sent with strangers, and receives a heavy fee) with me to St. Sophia, being told that a Christian entering it unprotected might be torn to pieces; and next day happening to pass it again, and having a sudden longing for another glimpse of Justinian's church, I procured an entrance by the simple means of tendering a medjidi (a coin worth 4*s.* 6*d.*) to the doorkeeper, and saw the Mohammedan worship proceeding to my heart's content.

spot of every view is the spot where these three waters meet, Seraglio Point, where the first Greek colonists built their Byzantium, where afterwards stood the palace of the Eastern Caesars, and where now stand the ruins of the fortress palace of the Ottoman Sultans; a wilderness of broken walls and towers, with cypress groves between, and the dome of St. Sophia rising behind. No spot on earth has seen so much history and so much crime as this, where dynasties of tyrants have reigned for sixteen weary centuries.

It has become a commonplace to say that the traveller ought to admire Constantinople from the sea, and then depart without landing, lest the spell be broken. A more foolish commonplace it would be hard to find. Constantinople is just as wonderful within as it is from outside. No doubt there is much to disgust and repel a stranger; much dirt, neglect, vice, and even ugliness. But there is far more to excite his curiosity and touch his imagination. Its mosques, its tombs, its crooked, rugged streets, with their crumbling houses of every tint, interrupted here by a spreading plane tree, there by a grand old Byzantine arch or cistern; its bridge of boats, over which a many-tongued crowd streams incessantly; its Fields of the Dead shaded by gloomy cypresses; its gardens green with vines and ruddy with pomegranates; above all, those majestic walls and towers, that have stood untouched since the fatal day of Mohammed the Second's conquest—all these and many more details of its inner form and life are as picturesque, as full of endless

interest and charm, as the view from the bosom of the sea is noble and imposing. Modern improvement has not yet laid its destroying finger on this accumulated wealth of beauty, the gift of many ages and races, as it too surely will when the Turkish dominion ends. If ever a war is undertaken on behalf of Constantinople, let us understand that it is not for the sake of the Turks, but for aesthetic reasons only: to preserve the loveliness of a city that is unique in the world and could never be replaced.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME POLITICAL REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH I have not written this book with any political purpose, I am unwilling to lose the opportunity of stating the conclusions to which, as it seems to me, any unprejudiced observer must be led by travelling through Russia and Asiatic Turkey. Seeing is like nothing else. I do not mean that it necessarily gives one new ideas; indeed, the largest and most careful study of these countries could hardly enable a man to develop any views absolutely new on a question which has been so thoroughly thrashed out during the last few years. But seeing with one's own eyes and hearing people on the spot talk—people who are, so to speak, themselves part of the problem—brings home to one certain facts and principles with a force and clearness which no amount of reading can give. One seems to perceive better what are the main and essential, what the secondary and accidental, factors in the problem. I will therefore try to state, as shortly as possible, the main impressions which this journey gave me as to the condition and prospects of Transcaucasia and the adjoining provinces of Turkey, the attitude of Russia, and the interests of England, premising only that I went with a mind which, so far as

it was prejudiced, was prejudiced against Russia, which I had learnt from childhood to look upon as the enemy of freedom, the power which oppressed Poland, and had enabled Austria to crush Hungary.

Respecting Transcaucasia, I have little to add to what has been said in an earlier chapter. It is not a prosperous country, yet signs of improvement may be discovered, and it is infinitely better off now than formerly under its own princes, or under the rule of Sultan and Shah. Life and property are secure. One railway has been made, and others are projected; commerce and industry are backward, yet not absolutely stagnant. Antagonisms of race and religion are far less fierce than in Turkey, Mohammedan races living contentedly under a Christian government. European ideas and inventions are beginning to be known, and may in time lay hold of the still sluggish minds of the people. The two great obstacles to moral and material progress are the want of schools, which the government is just beginning to establish more generally, and the co-existence—I can hardly say mixture—in the population of so many diverse and mutually repellent elements. Each race, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Persians, Lesghians, Mingrelians, Russians, Germans, is too weak numerically to absorb the rest, and too distinct in religion, language, and habits to blend on equal terms with any of the others. This is a phenomenon that constantly meets one in Eastern countries, and deserves more attention than it has received, as being not only a consequence, but a cause, of their unprogressive state.

For while in civilized Europe a small nation, if it be self-governing, is quite as likely to thrive as a large one, it is otherwise in regions so poor, so ill-governed, and so much exposed to the attacks of their neighbours as these are. Every great Oriental state has certainly shown itself bad enough, but to a large and powerful people there are always given chances which a small people cannot have.

The difficulty of fusing these races, or even of uniting them under a common system of law and administration, lies in the fact that the one force which controls them, the one channel in which most of their life flows, is religion. They have no patriotism, in our sense of the word, for they have neither a historical past (being mostly too ignorant for that conception) nor a country they can call exclusively their own. Religion is everything, since it includes their laws, their literature, and their customs, as well as their relation to the unseen world; and religion is not a fusing but a separating, alienating, repellent power. In ancient times there were in Western Asia and Europe pretty nearly as many religions as there were races, but these religions were not mutually exclusive, and required from their believers no hostility to other deities. Hence the ease with which the Roman empire drew so many diverse nations into its bosom, and formed out of them a sort of new imperial nationality. The rise of Christianity altered all this, since it claimed to be a world religion, which could own and brook no rival. Mohammedanism repeats the same claim, with a fierceness which the comparative bar-

barism of its professors has in the course of time rather intensified than diminished, while Christianity has learnt to look with more tenderness or apathy on forms of error. The different sects of Eastern Christians, though united in their aversion to Islam, from which they have suffered so much, have quite enough mutual jealousy to prevent any cordial political union. Greeks, Russians, Armenians, Bulgarians, would each and all of them prefer a Mohammedan government to that of any of the others, if such a government were a less detestable tyranny than that of the Sublime Porte now is. The problem is one far more difficult than Western or Central Europe had to deal with in the Dark Ages, when so many different races lay weltering together on the same territories, for then the omnipresent, all-pervading power of the Church was a unifying and assimilating power, which formed new nations by linking men of different blood and speech in the bond of a common faith. Here the force of religion is a centrifugal force: its lessons are fear and hatred.

To return from this digression to Transcaucasia, it may be said that the process of fusion which cannot but be supposed indispensable to its ultimate well-being has scarcely begun, and will necessarily be a very slow one. But in the mean time Russia, though her government is mainly military, is not altogether neglecting her duties to the people. She has emancipated the serfs, and substituted regular local courts for the old feudal jurisdictions which were even less pure and certainly more oppressive. She has exerted herself to foster various branches of industry with more zeal

than success, and, by creating security, has made it possible for foreign capital and enterprise to flow into the country. No doubt there is a good deal of corruption, a good deal of over-government and bureaucratic pedantry. But the laws are mild and equal for all subjects; and as there is no disaffection, I do not think there can be much oppression. Even in religious matters, while certain advantages are accorded to the dominant church, the worst evil a Roman Catholic or Protestant suffers is that he is forbidden to proselytize, and, if he marries a wife of a different persuasion, must suffer his children to be brought up in the Orthodox Eastern faith. Hardships, no doubt, these are, but hardships trifling compared to those which we were recently inflicting on Roman Catholics in Ireland. The Russian Church has never been theologically intolerant, but religion and loyalty or patriotism—words which mean much the same thing to a Russian—are so closely intertwined that one must not expect the lesson of religious liberty to be learnt in a day.

Russia's difficulties in the Caucasian countries, as in her other Asiatic provinces, arise from the want of two things, men and money. She has not got men to spare for colonization, seeing that, in addition to Siberia, Turkestan, and her newly acquired vast and fertile territories on the river Amur, she has far more land at home than there are people to cultivate it. When he can have a rich farm on the Don or Lower Volga for next to nothing, the peasant is not likely to cross the Caucasus or the deserts of Central Asia. Of all the states of Europe, there is none that has so little

motive to conquer or annex as Russia, for she has already far wider territories than she can turn to account for centuries to come. Then she wants money. In old Russia itself there is a vast deal still to do, and the money to do it is not in the country, but, like that which made the railways, must enter from the West. Every annexation costs her far more than it brings in. The process of buying land with money raised on mortgage is one that cannot go on long when you are paying seven per cent. for the money and getting next to nothing from the land. In fact, Russia has for the last twenty years or more been making bold drafts on the future, which it is by no means certain that the future will meet. She cannot continue indefinitely the practice of renewing these bills at increasingly heavy rates; and there are only three possible courses open to her: repudiation and total loss of credit, a disgrace which it is not to be supposed she will ever bring herself to face; heavier taxation, which so poor a country as Russia still is could not bear (it would at least make the government very unpopular, and check the rising domestic industries); and, thirdly, retrenchment. As Russian finance is practically out of the reach of criticism (though what purport to be the public accounts are published every year), no one can quite tell the present state of affairs, but it is understood that the most which the ministers claim is that they had very nearly or quite succeeded, when the present war broke out, in escaping the deficit of former years. The debt, as everybody knows, is already very large, and most of it recent.

In these circumstances not only war, but conquest also, is obviously against Russia's interest. In fact, annexation is even more pernicious than war, since it involves a constant drain of money which lasts when the temporary excitement of war is over and the people are no longer willing to make sacrifices for a present and exciting object. She might have made all her railways with the money she spent in subduing the mountaineers of the Caucasus, but when once she had occupied the country on each side of the chain, that subjection became necessary to secure peace. In Central Asia a piece of work of the same kind, and probably no less costly, lies before her. All this is, of course, perfectly well known and foreseen by intelligent Russians, who cannot understand why foreigners should not credit them with perceiving what is so obvious. It is felt most strongly by the Emperor and his advisers, on whom a responsibility rests such as no statesman in a parliamentary country is ever required to face. It made them hang back from war when the popular excitement against the Turks, who had perpetrated the Bulgarian massacres and seemed on the point of crushing Servia and Montenegro, was blazing high over the whole country. They were ultimately unable to avoid war, because the other European powers did not join them in threatening Turkey with a joint attack, to which, of course, she must have yielded, while they had given pledges it was impossible to recede from. But wholly apart from any question as to Austrian susceptibilities about the Danube, or English susceptibilities about

the Dardanelles, their domestic interests clearly prescribe a policy of abstinence from annexation. To add any large territory, either in Asia or Europe, to their already overgrown empire, would be to undertake responsibilities which they are not equal to, and under which their system might well break down.

Maps have a great deal to answer for in clouding men's minds. When a boy looks at a map, he fancies that the country which covers the most space on it is the most powerful. It is wonderful how many of us remain boys in this regard. Because Russia's dominions stretch over a vast space on the surface of the globe, an utterly fallacious notion of her resources has been generally accepted in the rest of Europe. She has undoubtedly the elements of one day becoming a very powerful monarchy. But for modern warfare, which is, above all things, a matter of money and science, she is probably less strong than the weakest of the three other great military states of the continent. And for the administration of semi-civilized territories, she is still more unfitted, having no such stock of able, vigorous men, with well trained minds, as we send every year to India. The highly educated Russians (i.e. the true Russians, for I except the Germans) are often brilliant, but almost always superficial; the great mass are not only ignorant, but, with all their natural cleverness, incapable of steady, solid, intellectual work, even work of a very humble kind, improvident, impatient. In European Russia, Germans are promoted over their heads; in Transcaucasia, they are considered inferior, as officials, to

the Armenians. They strike you, also, as wanting initiative, I mean that moral initiative which depends on a resolute and tenacious will, that does not fear responsibility. They are a bright people, a good-natured people, a likeable people, indeed a gifted and attractive people; but somehow you do not feel them to be a strong people, whom a race like the English or the German need fear in the long run. The Russians, therefore, with all their versatility and quickness, are not yet, and will not for many years to come, be thoroughly civilized. Till they become so, they may govern, but they must remain unable not only to civilize the races on a lower level, but even to give to those races such an impulse towards material progress as will make them profitable subjects, a strength to the empire instead of a mere dead-weight impeding its onward march. Besides, Russia has problems at home more than sufficient to absorb the energies and tax the wisdom of her statesmen, land questions raised by the recent emancipation of the serfs; labour questions, which the socialist party, not yet numerous, but active, is bringing before the people; religious questions; constitutional questions, which the establishment of local assemblies has helped to pose, and which will certainly rise into greater importance. These facts are so well known and weighed by thoughtful men in Russia herself that they find it hard to understand why territorial aggression should be so constantly assumed to be the chief object of their national policy. It is easy to shew them that the steady advance of

their frontier accounts for the existence of such a belief; easy, also, to remind them that there are plenty of people among themselves, and especially in the army, who still desire conquest. But the main facts remain, which I take to be indisputable: first, that Russia is far less powerful for attack than she is believed to be; secondly, that further conquests will only injure and weaken her. Either, therefore, she will abstain, or, if she does not, she will suffer for it, and be all the more likely to break up, all the less formidable in future to her neighbours.

These are considerations which must, I think, force themselves upon every one who travels in Russia, but perhaps most clearly on one who observes her government in her lately acquired Asiatic provinces. They ought to dictate, they must necessarily influence, her policy not only towards the Porte, but towards her Asiatic neighbours generally. Let me now try to state, with the same brevity, the impressions produced by what one sees and hears in Asiatic Turkey and Constantinople. I pass over the European provinces which I visited, because we have lately heard so much in England about European Turkey that no more is needed.

The first thing that strikes you—you have been told it a hundred times, and yet it strikes you fresh like a discovery—is that in Turkey there is one country, but many nations. The Turks, or (as we ought rather to say) the Mohammedans, are not Turkey any more than the Protestants beyond St. George's Channel are Ireland, and have no more claim to be considered as the representatives of the

people; in fact less, for they are not the most intelligent and industrious part of the population. They are one out of several nations dwelling on the same soil, but not intermarrying or otherwise mingling, and having nothing in common except mutual hatred. It is therefore a profound error to extend to them that sympathy which is given to a people resisting foreign invasion, even in an unjust cause, for the country they defend is not theirs. In the present war they are quite as much invaders as the Russians, and their expulsion, not their triumph, would be the true "liberation of the territory." This is so, not because they came as conquerors, for most parts of Europe are held by the descendants of conquerors, but because they have remained a conquering military caste, refusing equal civil rights to their subjects, maltreating and oppressing them in every conceivable way, and maintaining their ascendancy neither by superior numbers nor superior civilization, but by the power of the sword. They are still, in fact, a hostile army encamped among unarmed subjects who detest them, and are kept in check partly by the want of arms and courage, partly by their own intestine jealousies. This is most conspicuously the case in Europe and the islands, where the Muslims are in a comparatively small minority; but it is also true of Asia Minor and Syria, where they are equal, or nearly equal, in numbers to the Christians; and it only ceases to be true in the lower valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, where the Christians are comparatively few.

Of course I do not mean to ascribe this to the

national character of the so-called Osmanli Turks as an intruding race from the steppes of Turkestan; for they are not really Turks at all. Very little Turkman blood flows in the veins of the modern Mohammedan population of Asia Minor and Europe; hardly more perhaps than there is of Frankish blood in the modern French. That population is composed mainly of the descendants of those subjects[1] of the Eastern Roman empire who embraced Islam as the tide of Seljukian and Ottoman conquest advanced westward and northward, partly also of the mongrel race which has sprung from the marriages of Osmanlis with the Greek, Georgian, Circassian, and Slavonic captives brought in by the perpetual slave trade; and of janizaries, the offspring of Christian parents seized in childhood, and brought up as Mohammedans. How little of the true Turk there is in the modern Ottoman may be seen by any one who will compare the heavy languid faces and flabby figures of the Turkish royal family, for instance, with their drooping eyelids, smooth foreheads, and sensual rounded outlines, and the firm, hard, angular bony features, small, fierce, restless eyes and well-knit frames of the genuine Turkman or Tatar of the Aral or Caspian steppes.[2]

[1] Those Byzantine subjects were themselves a greatly mixed race, consisting partly of the primitive inhabitants of Asia Minor and Thrace Hellenized under Macedonian and Roman rule, partly of a heterogeneous slave population brought into the empire from all the surrounding countries.

[2] There are still some Turkman tribes who wander about Asia Minor with their flocks and herds, but they do not mix at all with the other inhabitants. There are also several places in Asia Minor where you may see a few genuine Turks still remaining, just as in the valleys of

It is not a matter of race, but of religion, which is far more serious. No Mohammedan race or dynasty has ever shewn itself able to govern well even subjects of its own religion; while to extend equal rights to subjects of a different creed is forbidden by the very law of its being.

The result is that, when foreign armies enter, whether it be Bulgaria or Armenia, they are welcomed as deliverers by the subject population; and when they retreat, it is upon those unhappy subjects that the inhuman vengeance of the Turkish soldiery is wreaked. In Armenia, at this moment, a timid and inoffensive people who have never meditated insurrection, who are not even accused of anything more than sympathy with the invaders, are being slaughtered by thousands in their blazing villages. I dare say the generals in command have not ordered or approved these massacres and torturings. That they are the spontaneous acts of irregular soldiers, perpetrated on their own unarmed fellow subjects, makes them an even more dreadful evidence of the condition of the Turkish empire.

The second fact, which comes home with unexpected force to the traveller who sees even a little of Asiatic Turkey, is, that the Turkish government is dying. It has been sick for a long time; and it may have yet a good many years to linger. But it is not the less certain that the sickness is incurable. It has no

the Asturias villages occur where the blue eyes and light hair of the people shew the permanence of a Gothic type; but these are rare exceptions.

money, and, having lost its credit, has no chance of getting any more from the West. Little can be raised by taxation, for the country is poor in quite a different sense from that in which Russia is poor—the sense of having absolutely no presently available resources: a thin population, the best part of which has been through large districts either massacred or drawn off to perish in battle; mines that have not been opened for want of capital; a soil only a small part of which is now under cultivation; a total want of roads and railways. There are really no rich people, except a few Greek and Armenian merchants in Constantinople, and a knot of palace favourites who have fattened on the spoils of the provinces; and very few even moderately well off. Worse even than the want of money is the want of capable and honest administrators, or of any tolerable machinery of government. There is no aristocracy either of birth[1] or wealth from which administrators or ministers could be drawn. Office has for many years past been given to palace favourites, who have climbed into power by the interest of their female relatives, or by subservience to some already established favourite. Among such men corruption is so natural that it is not surprising to find it all but universal; so that even if a tolerable administrative system were introduced, it could not be worked for lack of diligent and upright officials. To suppose that the men now in power would consent to have

[1] The old local aristocracy of the Beys is pretty nearly gone in most places, and has been so entirely excluded from administrative functions as to be unfit to assume them.

themselves ejected in favour of Franks is to suppose them willing to save the state by sacrificing all that the state means to them, all that makes it in their eyes worth the saving. The fact is that the Turkish empire would, like so many other Oriental monarchies, have been broken to pieces long ago either by conquest from without, had not the jealousies of the European powers maintained it, or by revolts within (such as that of Mehemet Ali), had not the plan been adopted of never leaving a governor more than two or three years in the same spot, and did not the presence of the Christians dispose all Muslims to see their safety in sticking to the central government.

The Mohammedans of Turkey are not without their good qualities; and in point of sobriety, industry, and honesty, the peasantry of Asia Minor, at least, may be favourably compared with those of some far more civilized countries. Their courage in battle it is unnecessary to praise. But take the race as a whole, and consider them as they have shewn themselves in matters of government and war during the last two centuries, and they appear hopelessly stupid, apathetic, helpless. They have not within those two centuries produced even a capable military leader; and, when they were at their best, in the great days of Mohammed II. and Suleiman the Magnificent, they never produced anything else; no administrator, no thinker or writer, no poet, no artist. To the thought or to the wealth of the world they have never made the smallest contribution. And now they are obliged to go to foreign races even for their generals.

That the Turkish government deserves to die is a thesis I shall not argue, being content simply to point to the condition to which it has brought some of the finest countries on earth. It is really not so much a government, in our sense of the word, as no government. Some philosopher, impressed by the evils of bureaucratic centralization, has defined the perfect government as anarchy *plus* a street constable. Here you have anarchy *plus* the tax-gatherer. In this paradise of *laissez-faire* nothing is done for the people or by the people, while everything is done to prevent one-half of them from protecting themselves. Government is a device for squeezing, with enormous waste in the process, a certain sum of money out of the poorest class, to be spent, most of it on the Sultan's harem and palaces, and the rest on ironclads and rifles, and for permitting everybody with arms in his hands to seize his neighbour's fields and carry off his neighbour's daughter when he takes the fancy. What has been written about and from Constantinople during the last few months has enabled most people to judge of the character of the Ottoman ministers and their system at the centre of affairs. But things are quite as bad at the circumference as at the centre. The attention of the West was so much drawn towards Herzegovina and Bulgaria by the events of last summer there that the miseries of the Asiatic subjects of the Porte have been unreasonably forgotten or neglected. They are fully as great as those of the Slavs or Cretans; and in so far worse that in Europe there exists no large body of tribes making murder and robbery its regular and daily occu-

pation as the Kurds, and latterly the Circassians also, do in Armenia. If any one will take the trouble to read the complaints of oppression and cruelties presented to the Porte by the Armenian Patriarchate in 1872 (since reprinted in England), and some of the more recent statements printed by the Armenians in England on the same topic, he will see that the state of Turkish Asia presents as grave and pressing a problem as that of Bulgaria itself.

It is easy to draw an indictment against the Porte. Details of its weakness and the misdeeds of its officials could be given to any extent, but the theme is so familiar that everybody is by this time either convinced or resolved not to be convinced. Far less easy is it to say what remedy can be applied to these evils, or what sort of government can be substituted for the Turkish. Setting aside annexation to Russia, which would of course be a boon to the Armenians as compared with their present condition, but in itself not a good thing either for the annexed provinces or for Russia herself, the question appears to be whether it is possible to reform the Turkish government, or whether an effort ought rather to be made to do in Asia Minor what was suggested for Bulgaria, and has in large measure been done in the Lebanon, and establish a dependent but practically self-governing state. Such a state could only be Armenia, as the Armenians are by far the most industrious and energetic race in that region, and in some parts outnumber the Mohammedans. They have already a constitution, obtained about 1861, with small elected councils

in every parish, which manage the schools and the ecclesiastical property, a representative assembly in each province, and a national assembly, also representative, of 160 members, which meets in Constantinople, and appoints permanent committees for civil and ecclesiastical business, communicating with the Porte through its president the Patriarch.[1] Although this organization is voluntary, that is, has no power of enforcing its will even on the Armenians, it has worked well, and done much to spread education among them, and to apply for the common good such funds as they can save from the rapacity of their enemies. Does the Armenian people then furnish materials for a new political community, or do the conditions exist which could give it a reasonable chance of success?

In the first place, though there are said to be over three millions, some say nearly four millions, of Armenians in Asiatic Turkey, many of them are scattered through the western and southern parts, especially in Cilicia (where some tribes have maintained their practical independence since the fourteenth century, when the kingdom of Lesser Armenia ended), so that in Armenia proper, the country

[1] This organization embraces only the so-called Gregorian Armenians, who acknowledge the Patriarch at Etchmiadzin as their spiritual head. They have a Patriarch at Constantinople who is, *quoad spiritualia*, under the jurisdiction of Etchmiadzin. The United, or Roman Catholic, Armenians, with their Patriarch (at present there are two rival claimants), and the Protestant Armenians (numbering about 25,000, and nearly all Presbyterians), remain outside of it. There used to be much ill-feeling between these three sets of Armenian Christians; but latterly a more liberal and friendly tone has prevailed: the sentiment of nationality is softening down even the spirit of hostility to so-called schismatics.

round the Upper Euphrates and Tigris, there may perhaps be no more than 1,700,000. There they live, mixed with a considerable Muslim population of Osmanli Turks, Tatars, Kurds, and other hill tribes. No doubt, if an Armenian principality were erected here, their co-religionists would flock in from other parts, as they flocked into Russian Armenia from Turkey after the war of 1829. But even so, their numbers would remain small, while the untamed Kurds and other Mohammedans would constitute an element of difficulty. Moreover, the Armenians, laborious and intelligent as they are, with a capacity for improvement of which their recent progress gives ample proof, have been trodden down by the heel of tyranny for so many centuries as to make it doubtful how far they are fit for self-government or capable of self-defence. They may in time recover, as their awakened national feeling ripens and strengthens, the courage and political self-confidence which would enable them to hold their own; as yet they have not given such evidence of these sterner qualities as the Greeks and Servians gave in winning their own freedom. Besides, there can be little doubt that Russia would strenuously oppose the creation of a principality towards which her own Armenian population would gravitate, and whose existence would, unless she could make its head her own creature, deprive her of the influence she now exerts in Asia as the protector of the Patriarch of Etchmiadzin and of the Armenian nation in general.

In the view of these obstacles, patriotic Armenians

themselves, as well as intelligent Franks who know the country, seem rather to incline towards the less revolutionary, but perhaps not really easier, expedient of attempting, even after so many failures, to improve the Turkish administration. Respecting a certain number of the reforms that are needed, there is a general agreement. Christian evidence ought to be made necessarily receivable in all courts, and placed in all points on a level with that of Mussulmans. The Mohammedan law, whether based on the Koran or on the Traditions, ought to be declared inapplicable to causes in which Christians are concerned; or, in other words, jurisdiction over them ought to be (as the Hatt i Humayun provided) confined to the so-called Nizam or civil courts, instead of going to the Sheri or ecclesiastical Mohammedan courts. They ought to be admitted or required to serve in the army and the police; and as it would probably be found impossible to disarm the Muslim population, it may, perhaps, be necessary to permit (as has been done in the Lebanon) the Christians to carry arms. After all, however, it is not so much changes in the law that are wanted as more faithful administration of the reforming ordinances so often issued by successive Sultans, and in practice so constantly neglected or overridden. How to secure their proper execution, how to check the corruption and partiality of the judges and the extortions of the tax-gatherers, is the real problem.

The plan most commonly proposed is to set up side by side with the local governor an adjunct,

whether a European consul or some other trustworthy Frank, who shall watch the governor, report upon his proceedings, receive complaints from the district of any oppressions practised there which the governor may not have properly dealt with, and forward such complaints, with his own comments, to Constantinople. Some think such an adjunct ought also to have a veto on the governor's proceedings, but as this might make the whole thing unworkable, it would clearly be better to limit him to the duty of watching and reporting. But, then, what security is there that these reports would be attended to at headquarters? The Armenian Assembly, through the Patriarch at Constantinople, makes frequent complaints of wrongs suffered by their co-religionists; the European consuls sometimes set in motion their respective ambassadors, yet how seldom and how tardily is redress granted. It would seem necessary to supplement the local protectors of Christian subjects by a central commission at the capital, which could bring a permanent and effective pressure to bear upon the Porte. And what what would this be but to put the Sultan's government into tutelage, and involve the European powers in the dilemma either of themselves administering the Turkish empire or of seeing their efforts baffled by a policy of *non possumus* and perpetual delays?

Moreover, it is not merely, perhaps not so much, an honest purpose and good laws that are wanting to the Ottoman administration: it is force and power. Except by sudden and spasmodic efforts, the government cannot make itself obeyed. The police are

inefficient, save for mischief; the irregulars cannot be kept in order; the Kurds systematically defy all authority, and, indeed, though living within the bounds of the empire, have never been properly its subjects. No amount of supervision and reporting will get over this fatal defect of weakness.

These are some of the difficulties which will have to be faced when terms of peace come to be discussed, for it is hardly to be supposed that things can be allowed to fall back to their old footing without at least an attempt to better the state of the Asiatic as well as of the European Christians. Although he would be a sanguine dreamer who should expect that any reforms can make Turkish rule satisfactory or permanent, still it may be quite possible to ensure such a measure of security for person and property as would allow the inhabitants of these provinces to advance in numbers, in wealth, and in intelligence, and thereby make them ultimately fitter for self-government. The European powers effected this in the Lebanon, after the massacre of 1860, by substituting for the Turkish officials local Christian governors and mixed courts, by establishing a local police force of all races, and excluding the Turkish soldiery. That security would also render possible another beneficial influence which one hears occasionally discussed on the spot, I mean colonization from Europe. There are, even close to Constantinople, large tracts of fertile land suitable for the plough and for pasture, which are now lying untouched, tracts where industrious settlers ought to be welcome, and

which they might probably have for a merely nominal payment. But it would be necessary for them to come in numbers sufficient to protect one another; roads would have to be made to give them access to the sea, and special arrangements must be made respecting taxation. Nothing would do so much for Asia Minor as an influx of such settlers; and any government but the Turkish would have long ago tried to attract them.

It remains to say a few words on those British interests in the re-settlement of the East of which we have heard so much. I pass by the question how far England would be justified in maintaining a reign of cruelty and oppression for the sake of avoiding certain possible but remote dangers to her own dominion, and at the cost of disgracing her own best traditions and of alienating from her the sentiments of the other peoples of Europe. I propose rather to look at the matter from the most purely sordid and selfish point of view. It does not often happen that the conscience of a nation prescribes one line of policy, and its interest (taking "interest" in the narrowest sense) another; and I think it will appear that this case shews no such divergence.

There are two spots in the possession of which by the Turks our advantage or security is supposed to be involved, firstly Constantinople and the Dardanelles, and secondly Armenia; and there are two modes in which it is supposed that the possession of those spots may affect us, first as regards our trade, secondly as regards our dominion in India. So far as trade is

concerned, it would undoubtedly be an injury to us if Russia were to become mistress of the Bosphorus. At present she has a rigidly protective tariff, and may possibly be misguided enough to cling to it for a good while yet. Her customhouses could check our import business with the southern shores of the Black Sea and with Northern Persia, into which we send some goods *via* Trebizond and Erzerum. However, the total value of this trade is but small, for the bulk of our Persian trade goes to Southern Persia by Bussorah, and both Persia and Asia Minor are poor countries, daily growing poorer. The utmost loss we could suffer by its stoppage would not exceed, say, £150,000 a year;[1] and what part would that sum be of the cost of fighting to protect it? So much for that branch of our interests.

India, and the route to India, are far more serious matters. True it is that we conquered India without the aid of the Suez Canal, and re-conquered it, one may almost say, twenty years ago, at a time when we were doing our best to discourage the incipient canal project. Still it will be generally admitted that the freedom of the canal is important, even if far from vital, to our military position in the East. But how does Constantinople affect the Suez Canal? Simply in this way, that it supplies a strong, perhaps an impregnable position, where a fleet might be kept

[1] The total value of our imports into Asiatic Turkey during the year 1875 was (if I do not mistake, being unable to get at the figures at this moment) not much over £3,000,000. Of course it is impossible to estimate exactly the profit on this trade, but it cannot amount to any very large sum.

which, in the event of war, could sally out and annoy us, or, if it could get so far, attack Port Said. If Constantinople were in the hands of an active naval power, we might have, in war time, to increase our Mediterranean fleet by three or four ironclads, and would be strongly tempted to occupy and fortify a port in some island such as Crete or Cyprus. The cost of those two operations would not in twenty years amount to what we should spend in a single campaign. That is literally all the difference that the control of the Bosphorus by Russia could make to India. It would leave her 1000 miles by sea from Egypt, and a distance of two months' march by land. How much simpler for her to contrive that a couple of merchantmen should be sunk in the Suez Canal. People say she could attack Syria, forgetting that she is now, in Transcaucasia, nearer to Syria than she would be at Constantinople. Add to this that Russia has neither money to build a fleet, which is now the most expensive engine of war a country can attempt to use, nor sailors to man it—her Black Sea fleet has always been notoriously bad, for the plain reason that she has a wretched mercantile marine—and the danger of her being able to drive the navy of England from the sea must appear altogether visionary. What would Nelson have said to such fears?

It is also supposed that the annexation by Russia of Turkish Armenia, and in particular (why, it is hard to divine) of Erzerum, would imperil our hold upon India. Armenia commands the Euphrates valley, the Euphrates valley leads to the Persian Gulf, the

Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean. All perfectly true, but what are the distances? Why, it is as far from Erzerum to the Persian Gulf as from Dover to Belgrade, and there are neither roads nor railways between. Here, again, the map has much to answer for; for, as some one has remarked, people study these countries in a map on so small a scale that they are quite misled as to the areas to be traversed or annexed. Nor is it easy to see what ground there is for the assumption that the possession of Erzerum necessarily involves either the desire to seize or the seizure of Bagdad or Damascus. Such advantages as Russia can require for moving towards the Persian Gulf her position in Transcaucasia gives her already. But for the respect which is due to some of those who appear to have entertained it, the idea of a Russian attack upon India might be pronounced the merest chimera, or, as Lord Hardinge used to call it, a political nightmare. For, even setting aside the prodigious difficulties of the route, we are, as the Russians know, infinitely stronger as well as better placed for defending than she for assailing. Supposing, however, that she should wish to harass us by intrigues with the frontier tribes, or even to meditate an invasion, she has a far readier means of access than either by the Euphrates valley or from Turkestan. Persia is a country of great natural resources, with a splendid geographical position between the Caspian and the ocean, inhabited by a population less warlike and fanatical than the Turkmans of the Oxus, a population industrious and settled, though reduced by

misgovernment to a point far below its natural level. Without a fleet, and practically without an army, it lies at Russia's mercy whenever she chooses to march eight or ten regiments into it. Some one has suggested that she wishes to conquer Turkish Armenia in order to attack Persia, as if she were not, with the command of the Caspian and of the Araxes valley as far as Djulfa, already admirably placed for that purpose. And from Persia she could menace India much more effectually than from either Khiva, or Bagdad, or Antioch.

Russia, however, has shewn no signs of desiring to acquire Persia. Nor is there any reason to think she covets the rest of Armenia, having got the most fertile parts of the Araxes valley already. She certainly wants Batum, and ought to have it, and may perhaps take a slice of coast along with it, by way of satisfying the vulgar desire to see some tangible result for a war, and for the sake of gaining an easier approach from the sea to the Araxes valley. But having no substantial motive for a large annexation in that quarter, it is hard to believe that she will make one. On the reasons above stated, I submit that nothing which the Czar can do in or obtain by the present war will make any substantial difference to the special interests which England has as the mistress of India. It is upon these special interests that stress has been laid by the friends of the Porte; and it is just there that the case, when looked closely into, breaks down most completely. The occupation of the Bosphorus and Armenia would bring him not a day nearer to

Peshawur, nor put us a day farther from Bombay, than we are at this moment.

But it is perfectly true that the acquisition by Russia of Constantinople, or of any considerable territory in either Asia or Europe, would seriously affect the prestige, as it is called, of England in the Levant and Euxine countries, her influence and moral weight. It would also be a misfortune for those countries themselves. The Russian system is too stiff and repressive; Russian officials are too uneducated, too corrupt, too anxious to advance the interests of their own church; in fine, Russia is altogether too imperfectly civilized and enlightened to make the further extension of her power a benefit. For the moment, of course, it would be preferable to the misrule of the Porte; but in the long run it might prevent the growth of something better. Nor do the Christian subjects of Turkey, Greeks or Armenians, wish for her success, except as a means of coercing the Porte. Better the Czar, they say with one voice, than a continuance of present evils; but rather give us, if it be possible, a reformed Turkey, bitted, so to speak, and spurred by Western riders, with as large a measure as may be of local independence. The name of England is still great in these countries. She is regarded with a mixture of admiration and disappointment: admiration as the home of wealth, freedom, and invention; disappointment and surprise as the apparent friend and protector of Turkish oppression. Her interference on behalf of the subject peoples would be welcomed with far greater satisfaction than that of Russia, for

it would not be suspected of being a cloak for the aggrandizement of her own church or empire. She is believed to be, if perhaps disposed to favour Mohammedanism, yet at least impartial between the rival Christian sects; and this alone gives her a great advantage in lands where the jealousy of Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, and Roman Catholics is so keen and watchful.

If the fall of the Turkish dominion is only a question of a few years sooner or later, is it not folly to cling to the *status quo*, and make its maintenance the chief aim of our policy? In the moral and political, as in the material world, there is in reality no such thing as a *status quo*: all is change and motion, if not from worse to better, then from better to worse. England may save the Sultan from foreign invaders, she may aid him to suppress internal revolts. But she will not thereby arrest that sure and steady process of decay which makes his government more and more powerless for anything but evil. She may delay, but she cannot prevent, the arrival, after another era of silent oppression, varied by insurrections and massacres, of a day when the Turkish empire will fall to pieces, and its spoils be shared by powerful neighbours or revengeful subjects.

A wise policy, foreseeing the inevitable, would endeavour to prepare for it, and would seek in the elevation of the native races the means of excluding those neighbours whose real or supposed ambition excites so much alarm. Degraded as they are, after ages of slavery and ignorance, the Christian populations

nevertheless offer a more hopeful prospect than the Muslims; yet even the Muslims might, under a firmer and juster administration than they have yet enjoyed, an administration which should secure to every man the fruits of his industry, and give them the chance of learning from the West something more than its vices, become far more capable than they now seem of self-government and of a peaceful union, as equals instead of rulers, in a common state.

Both the power and the ambition of Russia have been grossly exaggerated in this country. Many of us have mistaken her vast area and large population for real strength: most of us have done less than justice to her sentiments and purposes, which, if not ideally disinterested, are probably no more selfish than those of the other great European powers. But supposing the interests of England to be really imperilled by her advance, our true course surely is to remove those grievances which make her influence powerful, and have obliged the Christians of Turkey to look to her for help. It is our supposed indifference to their sufferings that has justified Russia's interference, and has given her the sort of protectorate she claims, and which it is feared she will use to our detriment. And the strongest barrier that could be erected against her further advance would be found in the creation among the subjects of Turkey of communities which would be unwilling to exchange a state of tolerable prosperity and peace under local institutions and officials of their own faith, protected by the Western powers, for the pressure of the Russian bureaucracy

and the Russian Church. Those who think worst of the Czars would then see both the pretext and the means of their aggression extinguished, and might regard with equanimity the approaching fall of Ottoman power. No observer of the present condition of Turkey will deny that the process of constructing such institutions will be difficult and its results uncertain. But it is essential to remember that only a choice of evils is offered, and that while the evils of the present state of things are intolerable and daily increasing, such a solution as that which has been mentioned gives at least a gleam of hope for the future, a foundation on which freedom and prosperity may be slowly built up. It is indeed not merely the most promising solution: it is the only solution. Everything else is at best postponement, and leads back, sooner or later, to the same *status quo*, whose fruits are insurrection, bankruptcy, massacre. Each former postponement has only aggravated the dangers and difficulties of the situation, far more grave now than they were in the days of the Crimean War. Further delay may make them insuperable, and may wreck the chance that yet remains of relieving these unhappy peoples from their load of misery, as well as of regaining and strengthening the legitimate influence of England in the East.

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